

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AS FOUND IN SAYYID  
QUTB'S *FĪ ZILĀL AL-QUR'ĀN*

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**IN THE NAME OF ALLAH**  
**THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL**

**DECLARATION**

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, HEREBY DECLARE THAT THIS THESIS IS  
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ARE DULY ACKNOWLEDGED

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## ABSTRACT

Sayyid Quṭb (d.1966) represented one of the most outstanding Muslim writers on Islamic thought in the twentieth century. His importance stems from the fact that his writings influenced numerous generations of Egyptian Muslims and Muslims outside of Egypt.

This study examines the concept of social justice as found in Quṭb's *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*. Chapter one is devoted to a study of the formative phase of Quṭb's life and career before his emergence as an influential Muslim scholar. Chapter two discusses Quṭb's socio-political thought between 1947 and 1952, prior to *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*. In this chapter, Quṭb's literary study of the Qur'ān, which became a preparatory background for his interest in Islam, will also be examined. Chapter three deals with general features of *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, including Quṭb's approach to Qur'anic commentary. Chapter four examines the doctrinal bases of social justice. In this chapter, the nature of social justice and its foundations will be discussed in accordance with Quṭb's understanding of the doctrinal conception of Islam (*al-taṣawwur al-ī'tiqādī*), including the divinity (*ulūhiyya*), supreme authority (*rubūbiyya*) and sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*) of God. Chapter five addresses the practical dimensions of social justice. In this chapter, the discussion will focus on Quṭb's outlook on the implementation of social justice with respect to the practical reality of Muslims' lives. His discussions on the necessity of establishing an Islamic State and implementing proper management of the economic system according to Islamic principles will also be covered. The study concludes with an assessment of the significance of Quṭb's notion of social justice and his treatment of the current social, economic and political problems facing the Muslim *Umma* and Egyptian society.



## Transliteration

ء	' (omitted at the beginning of a word)	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	c
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y
ص	ṣ	ال	al-, 'l-
ض	ḍ		

The diphthongs are written: ay (أَيّ)

aw (أَوّ)

The three short vowels are represented by *a* for *fathā*, *i* for *kasra* and *u* for *ḍamma*.

The long vowel are represented by *ā*, *ū*, *ī*..

The *tā'* marbūṭa is represented by *at* when in construct and omitted at the end of the

word. (except in words like *zakāt* and *ṣalāt* which are maintained as they commonly appear as *zakāt* and *ṣalāt* in some English texts).

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## Introduction

The twentieth century continued to witness the decline of the Muslim world in its society, economy and politics as compared with the West. This phenomenon worsened with the appearance of corrupt political leaders in certain countries, who used their authority to exploit national resources for their personal interest and that of their cronies among the bourgeois and autocrats without considering the needs of the general population. Under the guise of socialism, nationalism and democracy, these leaders manipulated the uncertain political situation so as to keep their countries and their people in their grip. In so doing, oppression and political pressure were sometimes used against any Muslim group attempting to revive or reform the countries on the basis of Islam. In addition, the West's interference in the politics and economy of the Muslim countries contributed towards the deterioration of the situation rather than solving the problems.<sup>1</sup>

Realizing this phenomenon, there appeared some Muslim scholars and thinkers in the early and mid-twentieth century, who were concerned about the problems and tried to find solutions from the Islamic perspective. Names like Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d.1897), Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d.1905) and Rashīd Riḍā (d.1935) were among those who saw that “something must be done” to understand the causes of decline so as to rectify the situation and restore Muslim countries to their proper place in the world.

Sayyid Quṭb (d.1966) was one of the most important and influential Muslim figures of the twentieth century who focused on the problems facing the Muslim *Umma* as a whole and Egyptian society in particular. The continuing dire economic situation of his country, the political corruption and the incessant squabbles of the political parties caused him to feel increasingly disillusioned and frustrated. In his

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<sup>1</sup> Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālidi, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-Milād ilā 'l-Istishhād* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1994), 414–416. See also Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 17.



view, the revival of the Muslim life in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* of the Prophet, peace be upon him, was the only solution. Many books and articles were written by Quṭb suggesting this strategy, and calling his fellow Muslims to return to Islam as “their own resource” to find solutions to the existing problems, besides restoring them to their proper place as Muslims. *Al-ʿAdāla al-Ijtimāʿiyya fī'l-Islām* (1949), *Maʿrakat al-Islām wa'l-Ra'smāliyya* (1951), *al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī wa'l-Islām* (1951), *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* (1952), and *Maʿālim fī'l-Ṭarīq* (1964), were among those of Quṭb's works that clearly indicated his ideas.

Of all these works, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* was the longest and, undoubtedly, the most widely circulated. It has enjoyed wide acceptance among Muslim scholars, writers and sincere seekers of the truth about Islam all over the Muslim world. In addition, *Zilāl* was Quṭb's commentary of the Qur'ān which attempted to present a comprehensive picture of Islam and to give consistent answers to Muslims facing the current socio-political challenges of the modern period. Furthermore, the work was a reflection of Quṭb's thought after undergoing various experiences, including several years' imprisonment by the Egyptian government. That was why most of *Zilāl* was written while its author was serving a prison sentence.

This study will examine the concept of social justice as described in Quṭb's *Zilāl*. *Zilāl* has been chosen because it is Quṭb's most important work and manifests Quṭb's maturity of thought after devoting several years to studying the Qur'ān and understanding its message, coupled with his long search for the root of the problems facing his country. Moreover, Quṭb's discussion in the *Zilāl* itself clearly represents the real phenomenon facing Muslims in the middle of the twentieth century, in particular, the Egyptians, and their social, economic and political decline after World War II. Economic disparity widened as a result of the unjust distribution of wealth in Egypt at that time and the increase in unemployment. This was coupled with the political uncertainty in the country which led to confrontation between the ruling



government and members of the Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn). As Musallam writes:

Quṭb is noted for the revolutionary zeal with which he promoted what he considered the inevitable establishment of a true and just “Islamic society” (*al-Mujtamaʿ al-Islāmī*)... Quṭb’s Qur’anic Commentary *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān* (In the Shadows of the Qur’ān), 1952–1965, is universally recognised as an outstanding contribution to contemporary Muslim thought and culture. Indeed, Quṭb’s writings have become an integral part of Islamic resurgence in the past thirty years which draws much of its strength, inter alia, from the unmitigated failures of the Arab regimes to build viable societies<sup>2</sup>

The notion of social justice is not new in Egyptian society. In this regard, Quṭb was one who saw the need to establish justice in social affairs of the Egyptian people, believing that only the “absolute justice of Islam” was the solution to the existing problems. The effectiveness of such justice, which is applicable to all aspects of human life – social, economic and political – can be perceived only when it is based on a belief (*ʿaqīda*) in God. Quṭb therefore believed that it was not Islam that was the cause of the problems but the Muslims themselves who had distanced their lives from true Islam. Thus, Quṭb’s reaction to the crisis was to advocate a return to the basics of Islam – the call to the doctrinal belief.

The idea of writing this study came after realizing that none of the available literature had dealt extensively or exclusively with Quṭb’s notion of social justice, one of the most important aspects of his *Zilāl*. Ṣalāh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālīdī’s works, *Madkhal ilā Zilāl al-Qur’ān* (1986), and *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān fī’l-Mizān* (1986) for instance, focused on Quṭb’s general ideas as they appeared in the *Zilāl*, including his interpretation of terms like *jāhiliyya*, *ḥākimiyya* and *ʿubūdiyya*. Questions about Quṭb’s application of such terms to social, political and economic issues are not discussed extensively by Khālīdī. *Studies on Sayyid Quṭb’s Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān* (1993), by Sohirin Muhammad Solihin, follows an approach similar to that of

<sup>2</sup> Adnan Ayyub Musallam, *The Formative Stages of Sayyid Quṭb’s Intellectual Career and His Emergence as an Islamic Dāʿiyah* (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1983), 1–2.

Khālidī's earlier work, when general issues relating to Islam were examined in the light of Quṭb's discussion.

William E. Shepard's *Sayyid Quṭb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (1996) is an interesting work, examining Quṭb's development of thought from the early edition of the *al-ʿAdāla* to its sixth edition published few years before his death. Since it was a translation of *al-ʿAdāla*, Shepard's discussion concentrates on describing the changes made by Quṭb, such as terms, corrections of misprints and grammatical errors. Detailed explanation of the significance of such changes in Quṭb's thought as a reflection of his deeper understanding of the Qur'ān did not attract Shepard's interest. Shepard focused mainly on *al-ʿAdāla* for his thesis, without referring to Quṭb's *Zilāl*, which of course dealt with the existing issues more convincingly as a result of Quṭb's deeper understanding of the Qur'ān and its messages which in his view were relevant to the existing problems.

In *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (1996), Ibrahim M. Abu Rabi<sup>c</sup> examines Sayyid Quṭb's socio-political thought as reflected in Quṭb's *Zilāl* and is closer to this study. Yet he devotes more attention to a general discussion of Quṭb's socio-political ideas than to the form of a political system, including its characteristics, and aspects of economic management, which, in Quṭb's view, were vital in creating social justice in human society as whole.

Therefore, this study attempts to provide a more comprehensive analysis of Quṭb's notion of social justice, including his understanding of Islamic doctrinal belief, and his views on political and economic issues to which the application of social justice, he believes, was a dictate of Islam and could not be disregarded. In this study, Quṭb's main thought and themes on the above issues, which are scattered throughout the *Zilāl*, will be examined and reorganized under relevant headings, in accordance with the author's priority in discussing the concept of social justice. In

addition, Quṭb's writings prior to the *Zilāl*, such as *al-ʿAdāla al-Ijtimaʿiyya fī'l-Islām*, *Maʿrakat al-Islām wa'l-Ra'samāliyya* and *al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī wa'l-Islām*, will also be studied to see how their ideas were developed as a result of the author's experiences in living in the contemporary Egyptian society, coupled with his maturity of thought on Islam after devoting almost ten years to examining the Qur'anic message.

Quṭb's interpretation of the Qur'anic verses relating to social justice and his use of terms like *ḥākimiyya* and *jāhiliyya* will also be evaluated, along with the views of some modern and traditional scholars such as al-Mawdūdī (d.1979), Rashīd Riḍā (d.1935), Ibn Kathīr (d.1373) and Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328). The aim is to assess the extent of difference and similarity between Quṭb's views and those of the scholars and the reasons for such difference and similarity.

This study is therefore divided into five chapters. Chapter One is devoted to the life of Sayyid Quṭb and his formative years. Chapter Two discusses Quṭb's socio-political thought between 1948 and 1952, prior to the writing of the *Zilāl*. Chapter Three touches on the *Zilāl*, including its creation and Quṭb's approach to it. Chapter Four discusses the doctrinal bases of social justice as viewed by Quṭb. In this chapter, questions relating to God's attributes such as *ulūhiyya*, *rubūbiyya* and *ḥākimiyya* will be discussed to see how these ideas were then expanded by Quṭb to relate them to the general foundation of social justice. Chapter Five is devoted to a study of the practical dimension of social justice. It discusses how faith (*īmān*) in God and His attributes, which occupies an individual's heart, must then be translated into action appropriate to the reality of a Muslim's life. Thus questions of the political system of Islam and the management of wealth will be discussed in line with Quṭb's belief that justice will exist only when the *sharīʿa* governs human affairs and there is an Islamic state that executes these divine laws.

The study will conclude with an assessment of Quṭb's thought and his treatment of social justice to examine its relevance in this modern society where secular institutions have been built on the ruins of religion.



## Chapter One

### Sayyid Quṭb: The Formative Phase

#### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the formative phase of Quṭb's career before he emerged as an influential figure and scholar of the twentieth century. His writings on literature and social and political issues as well as his Islamic solutions to the social and political crises facing the Muslim world in general and Egyptian society in particular, have attracted both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars to study his works. Moreover, as Abu Rabi<sup>°</sup> states, Quṭb's importance "stems from the fact that he has influenced numerous generations of Egyptian and Arab intelligentsia who seek to understand Islam as an ideology that leads to radical changes in the social order."<sup>3</sup>

The chapter will discuss Quṭb's life, his works and the environment that shaped his intellectual thinking. In addition, the lives of Quṭb's Muslim contemporaries, like Ḥasan al-Bannā, °Abbās al-°Aqqād and al-Mawdūdī, will be analysed regarding their influence on Quṭb's intellectual thinking during this formative phase.

#### 1.2 Life and Works

Sayyid Quṭb Ibrāhīm Ḥusayn Shādhilī was born in a village called Mūshā in the Asyut District of Egypt in October 1906.<sup>4</sup> His father, Quṭb Ibrāhīm, was a pious and well-respected landowner who had, in fact joined the Nationalist Party (al-Ḥizb al-Waṭanī).<sup>5</sup> As an active member, his house became a private and public meeting-place

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<sup>3</sup> Ibrahim Abu Rabi<sup>°</sup>, "Sayyid Quṭb: From Religious Realism to Radical Social Criticism," *Islamic Quarterly* 28 (1984): 103.

<sup>4</sup> Ṣalāḥ °Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālīdī, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-Milād ilā'l-Istishhād* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1994), 15.

<sup>5</sup> The Nationalist Party (al-Ḥizb al-Waṭanī) was founded by Muṣṭafā Kāmil in 1907. The party was mainly concerned with its struggle and demands for the departure of the British from Egypt. See for details P.J. Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 137 and 204–205.

for other party members who would come to discuss various issues and problems concerning their country. It was at this stage that the young Quṭb gradually became aware of the contemporary political struggle of the country and grew more sympathetic to anti-British nationalism.<sup>6</sup>

Quṭb's mother, Fāṭima, came from a big family. Her father and two of her brothers were educated at al-Azhar University in Cairo.<sup>7</sup> She was described as a religious woman who influenced him greatly. She loved listening to Qur'anic recitation and encouraged her children to memorize the Qur'ān and master its recitation. She also implanted in her children Islamic values such as morality, truthfulness and sincerity. Her vision was to ensure that all her children had the best education and became good Muslims motivated by their faith.<sup>8</sup> In this regard, Quṭb made the following special tribute to his mother, to whom he dedicated his book, *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī'l-Qur'ān* (Artistic Portrayal in the Qur'ān):

You hope that God might help me to memorize the Qur'ān, and that He might give me a beautiful voice so that I might recite a particular part any time you wanted. Then you made me choose this new road after a part of your wish was fulfilled and I had memorized the Qur'ān.<sup>9</sup>

Quṭb had three sisters: Nafīsa, Ḥamīda and Amīna. His only brother was Muḥammad.<sup>10</sup> Among his sisters, Ḥamīda and Amīna played an active part in the Islamic movement following their brother Quṭb. Both experienced being tortured and

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<sup>6</sup> In his autobiography *Ṭīf min al-Qarya*, Quṭb described how he was influenced by current developments in his village, where many young men attached themselves to the Nationalist Party in its struggle for the independence of Egypt. See Sayyid Quṭb, *Ṭīf min al-Qarya* (Cairo: Lujnat al-Nashr li'l-Jāmi'īn, 1945), 133–134.

<sup>7</sup> Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālīdī, *Sayyid Quṭb: al-Shahīd al-Ḥayyī* (Amman: Maktaba al-Aqsā, 1985), 59. See also 'Ādil Ḥamūda, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-Qarya ilā'l-Mishnaqa* (Cairo: Sīnā li'l-Nashr, 1990), 31.

<sup>8</sup> Khālīdī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 60.

<sup>9</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī'l-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1994), 6.

<sup>10</sup> Khālīdī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 62.



imprisoned during 1954, the year of ordeal for the Ikhwān.<sup>11</sup> Quṭb's brother, Muḥammad grew up to become a well-known Islamic writer and scholar.<sup>12</sup> His association with his brother Quṭb in Islamic activities led to his being imprisoned twice, first in 1954 and again in 1965.<sup>13</sup>

Quṭb had an ordinary life, although his curiosity and love of reading distinguished him from the other children of Mūshā. At a very young age he was able to read newspapers to the villagers who came to his house to hear the latest news. Quṭb also spent a large amount of money on buying books from the local travelling bookseller, who came frequently to his village.<sup>14</sup>

Quṭb attended the state elementary school (*madrasa*) instead of the traditional Islamic school (*kuttāb*) at the age of six.<sup>15</sup> Quṭb's years at the *madrasa* witnessed his excellence in reading and writing. At a very early age, he mastered important aspects of traditional Arab Muslim culture, such as the knowledge of Arabic, syntax and morphology, which enabled him to be in the ranks of the literati (*udabā'*) in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>16</sup> At this time also he showed his commitment by memorizing

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<sup>11</sup> Khālidi, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 67–68.

<sup>12</sup> Muḥammad Quṭb is currently a Professor of Islamic Studies at King Abd al-Aziz University, Saudi Arabia. He has written many books and articles on Islamic topics, e.g. *al-Insān bayna'l-Māddiyya wa'l-Islām*, *Jāhiliyyat al-Qarn al-ʿIshrīn* and *Manhaj al-Tarbiyya al-Islāmiyya*. Some of his works have been translated into several other languages. See Khālidi, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 64–66.

<sup>13</sup> Khālidi, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 64.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>15</sup> There were two parallel education systems at that time: the government school (*madrasa*) and the Qur'anic schools, or *kuttāb*. The *Kuttāb* emphasized religious education and the memorization of the Qur'ān, whereas the *madrasa* was a modern school and well organized in its range of subjects and its teachers. It should be noted that there was rivalry between these two schools as the result of a continuing conflict of forces of tradition and modernity in Egyptian society. See Quṭb, *Tifl*, 19–21.

<sup>16</sup> Adnan Ayyub Musallam, "Prelude to Islamic Commitment: Sayyid Quṭb's Literary and Spiritual Orientation 1932–1938," *The Muslim World* 80 (1990): 177.

some parts of the Qur'ān.<sup>17</sup> By the age of ten, he had committed the whole Qur'ān to memory by himself.<sup>18</sup>

In 1921, Quṭb was sent to Cairo at the age of thirteen for his secondary education.<sup>19</sup> In fact, he was supposed to leave for Cairo two years earlier, but, owing to the breakdown in communications caused by the Nationalist revolution of 1919,<sup>20</sup> the project had to be postponed until 1921.<sup>21</sup> In Cairo, Quṭb spent another four years living with his maternal uncle, Aḥmad Ḥusayn, an Azharite and journalist. In 1925, he entered Kulliyat al-Mu'allimīn, a preparatory and secondary school.<sup>22</sup> Three years later, he joined a two-year course, al-Fuṣūl al-Tamhīdiyya li'l-kulliyat al-Dār al-ʿUlūm, (the Preparatory High School of Dār al-ʿUlūm) before being admitted into Dār al-ʿUlūm's Teachers college.<sup>23</sup> Quṭb successfully completed his studies in 1933 and obtained a BA degree in Arabic Literature and the Diploma Certificate of Education.<sup>24</sup> Upon graduation, he became a teacher and inspector for the Ministry of

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<sup>17</sup> Among the factors that effected Quṭb's achievement in memorizing the Qur'ān were his mother's encouragement and her wish to see her children having this ability, and the challenge Quṭb faced from those students of the *kuttāb* who argued that the *madrasa* could not produce students who had the ability to memorize the whole of the Qur'ān. See Ḥamūda, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 34–35.

<sup>18</sup> Ḥamūda, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 34.

<sup>19</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: the Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 38.

<sup>20</sup> The nationalist revolution of the 1919 was the result of the arrest of Sa'd Zaghlūl, one of the nationalist leaders of the Wafd Party, who was later deported to Malta, after being forbidden by the British foreign minister to leave for London to present the Egyptian case for independence. See for details Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age (1798–1939)* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 211–212.

<sup>21</sup> Kepel, *Muslim Extremism*, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Ḥamūda, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 49.

<sup>23</sup> Dār al-ʿUlūm was founded in Cairo in 1872 specifically to train students as teachers of Arabic for the state primary and secondary schools and became the first secular institute for higher learning. Among those who graduated from Dār al-ʿUlūm was Ḥasan al-Bannā. See Ḥamūda, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 49–50.

<sup>24</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 140.

Education, to which he devoted himself for nearly eighteen years until he resigned on 18 October 1952.<sup>25</sup>

Quṭb's interest in politics began in his early days in Cairo, when he gradually became a partisan of the Wafd, the party particularly associated with independence, parliamentary government and the Nationalist cause.<sup>26</sup> In this regard, it seems that his close association with his Uncle Ḥusayn's friend, ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād<sup>27</sup>, a modernist and outspoken Wafdist journalist, contributed to this development. Quṭb's writings of the 1930s and 1940s were non-religious in nature and much more directed to literary interests, such as poems and articles. Those writings, however, were seen to be the preparation for the next phase, in which he gradually produced works of a critical and creative genre. In addition, he wrote on various other topics, such as education, politics and social issues.

Quṭb's first literary work was *Muḥimmat al-Shāʿir fī'l-Ḥayāh* (The Poet's Function in Life), published in 1932.<sup>28</sup> The work expounds his stand with regard to the contemporary debates between the new schools of poetry and the neo-classical school on the role of poets and their contribution to Egyptian society socially, economically, politically and culturally in particular.<sup>29</sup> The work also indicates the beginning of Quṭb's direct participation in the literary circles of that time as a young literary critic. Explaining Quṭb's reason for writing the work, Musallam points out: "he rebuts those who accused the young poets of the new school of poetry of self-

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<sup>25</sup> Ḥamūda, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 50.

<sup>26</sup> The Wafd Party was founded by Saʿd Zaghlūl in 1918. Its basic demand was the independence of Egypt from British rule by peaceful means and limiting the power of the king. See Khālīdī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 265.

<sup>27</sup> ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād (1889–1964) was a well-known literary figure and a journalist. Details of his literary career and his influences on Quṭb will be given in a subsequent topic.

<sup>28</sup> The work was based on a public lecture which he delivered at Dār al-ʿUlūm in 1932.

<sup>29</sup> The leader of the new school of poetry was ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād. The neo-classical school, on the other hand, was represented by figures such as Aḥmad Shawqī (1869–1932) and Iḥfāz Ibrāhīm (1871–1932). See Musallam, "Prelude To Islamic Commitment," 177–179.



centredness and excessive pessimism by saying that this pessimism and restlessness are a true reflection of the Egyptian society of this period.”<sup>30</sup> Quṭb wrote:

Why should the poets sing hymns of happiness and exuberance? Have we won a military battle against the armies of the enemies...? Have we attained our usurped independence? Everything in the country deserves complaint....Therefore, our young poets who are complaining and in pain are sincere in their feelings. They will leave behind them for future generations a clear picture of this confusing period.<sup>31</sup>

Quṭb's active participation in the literary circles of the 1930s and the early 1940s, together with his continual writings on literary subjects, led him to be one of the well-known figures of the time. Numerous articles of his were published along with those of other respected figures such as al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn<sup>32</sup> and several others. It was through his writings in magazines like *al-Uṣbūʿ*, *al-Wādī*, *al-Risāla*, *al-Daʿwa* and *al-Ishtirākiyya* that Quṭb attacked and criticized other groups of poets and literati who, in his view, were insincere and lacked social and ethical qualities in their literary works.<sup>33</sup> In an article published in *al-Uṣbūʿ* magazine, for instance, Quṭb accused those of the older generation of literati of being harsh in their attacks on the younger generation of poets.<sup>34</sup> Also in *al-Risāla*, Quṭb, a student and a strong supporter of al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād, attacked al-Rāfiʿī (1880-1937) and his works such as *Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān* (1926) and *ʿAlāʾl-Sufūd* (1929). Quṭb's attack on al-Rāfiʿī was his attempt to

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<sup>30</sup> Musallam, "Prelude To Islamic Commitment," 180.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>32</sup> Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889–1973) was a famous writer who also occupied high ministerial office between the years 1920s to late 1930s. From 1950 to 1952, he was Minister of Education in the Wafd government. He wrote various books. These include *The Future of Culture in Egypt* and *Pre-Islamic Poetry*. His works on Islam include *ʿAlā Ḥāmish al-Sīra* and *al-Waḍʿ al-Ḥaqq*. See Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 324–339.

<sup>33</sup> Khālidi, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 110.

<sup>34</sup> The clash between the old and the new groups of literati leading to their literary debates was mainly due to their differences in mentality and outlook on life. Quṭb represented the new groups, following his mentor, al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād. See Musallam, "Prelude To Islamic Commitment," 182–185.

defend his mentor, al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād, who had clashed with al-Rāfi<sup>ʿ</sup>ī.<sup>35</sup> The dispute between al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād and al-Rāfi<sup>ʿ</sup>ī was due to al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād's jealousy over the latter's work, which received great praise from the Wafdist leader, Sa<sup>ʿ</sup>d Zaghlūl. As Musallam notes, "al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād became very jealous upon hearing that Zaghlūl, the man to whom he had dedicated his life in service of the nationalist cause, had given his enemy al-Rāfi<sup>ʿ</sup>ī such praise."<sup>36</sup>

At this stage, Quṭb's literary works, as reflected in his poetry in many ways, revolved around his personal experience of life, in addition to his response to the heated issues and literary debates of that time. In his poems, "*al-Ghadd al-majhūl*" (The Unknown Morrow) and "*al-Sirr aw al-Shā<sup>ʿ</sup>ir fī wādī al-mawtā*" (the secret or the poet in the Valley of the Dead), for example, Quṭb expressed his own troubled feelings in searching for the true meaning of life and human existence. Here he described himself as a man who knew nothing about the purpose of human existence and his relationship with life and the universe in general. All this made him afraid of facing the days to come.<sup>37</sup>

There are, in fact, many reasons for Quṭb's unhappiness during this stage of his literary career. One should bear in mind, however, that such reasons can be understood only within the context of contemporary Egyptian society and Quṭb's personal experience of life. Besides the current uncertainty of the future of the young intellectuals following the repressive action that they had suffered from the Egyptian authorities, there was also another reason for Quṭb's unhappiness during this stage: the death of his beloved father. The heavy burden of responsibility for the welfare and education of his brother and two sisters therefore, fell upon his shoulders.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Musallam, "Prelude To Islamic Commitment," 185. See also Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-Milād*, 122–124.

<sup>36</sup> Musallam, "Prelude to Islamic Commitment," 185.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 179–180. See also Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 258.

<sup>38</sup> Musallam, "Prelude To Islamic Commitment," 181.

In the context of Quṭb's formative stage of his career, his troubled state of mind in the 1930s should be seen as the beginning of his transformation from a poet having a secular lifestyle to an Islamicist.<sup>39</sup> This is because in the continual search for a peaceful life, Quṭb later turned to the Qur'ān and studied its verses. This happened with the appearance in 1939 of his article "*al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī'l-Qur'ān*" in *al-Muqtaṭāf* magazine. Though Quṭb's approach to the Qur'ān as reflected in the article was still literary, it signified a gradual transformation in his literary career as the Qur'ān became his new subject of research. Here, he pointed out the inimitability (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'anic literary style and called for a comprehensive study of the Qur'ān as a literary text.<sup>40</sup> In the conclusion of the article Quṭb wrote:

my purpose in presenting [this article] is merely to show examples and to draw [readers'] attention...The subject [of course] is prolific and good for detailed studies (*al-dirāsāt al-mustafīda*).<sup>41</sup>

Quṭb further added:

there is a hastiness in [writing] this early prolific research. Perhaps it has become a starting point for a further research.<sup>42</sup>

At this point there was clearly a change in Quṭb's intellectual orientation, marking the beginning of his growing interest in the Qur'ān and Islam itself. Though the study was for a literary purpose only, a few years later, his Qur'anic literary works appeared as books entitled *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī'l-Qur'ān* in 1945 and *Mashāhid al-Qiyāma* in 1947. The books, which were the result of his extensive study of Qur'anic imagery, indicated their author's maturity in literary criticism.

<sup>39</sup> A secular life style here initially refers to Quṭb's life in the 1930s including his literary works, which generally seemed to be un-Islamic and far from religious. This of course can be traced back to his association with al-ʿAqqād himself, a secular modernist and outspoken Wafdist journalist.

<sup>40</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 130.

<sup>41</sup> Khālidi, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 269.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



Quṭb, however, did not raise questions about the nature of the Qur'ān itself; rather, his aim was a purely literary in the sense of describing the elements of beauty in its style of propagating a religious message. More importantly in these books, the seeds of Quṭb's interest in Islam were gradually germinating when he began to discuss how the charm of the Qur'ān had successfully influenced people like 'Umar al-Khaṭṭāb to convert to Islam. Quṭb wrote in *al-Taṣwīr*:

...besides the charismatic personality of the Prophet that had a major effect on converting the first followers to Islam like Khadīja, Abū Bakr, 'Alī and Zayd, we also found that the Qur'ān was the decisive factor in the process of conversion or perhaps became one of the important factors in [bringing] those of the early days of Islamic mission (*da'wa*) into faith...it is undeniable that the charm of the Qur'ān has a strong impact in accelerating him ['Umar's conversion] to Islam.<sup>43</sup>

In *Mashāhid* Quṭb states:

...in order to make the Qur'ān look new to our eyes...As the most precious book the Arabic library contains, it should be re-reviewed, be given back its newness and be rescued from under the heaps of exegeses, whether philological, grammatical, jurisprudential, historical or mythical. The artistic side and the literary qualities should be brought forward; and attention should be drawn to its aspects of beauty.<sup>44</sup>

In *Taṣwīr* and *Mashāhid*, one also finds that Quṭb began to refer to the works of traditional scholars like *Sīra Ibn Hishām* and *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* in supporting his arguments. Though his reference to those works was minimal, it indicates his tendency to look back at some Islamic sources when discussing questions of Islamic history.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Quṭb, *Taṣwīr*, 11–13.

<sup>44</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Mashāhid al-Qiyāma fī 'l-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993), 9.

<sup>45</sup> See, for instance, Quṭb, *Taṣwīr*, 12–13 and 26. In *Mashāhid* Quṭb referred to several books of *tafsīr* like al-Bayḍāwī, al-Rāzī and al-Zamakhsharī when explaining Meccan and Medinan verses of the Qur'ān. See Quṭb, *Mashāhid*, 273.

Quṭb's writings on political and social topics appeared in the middle of the 1940s.<sup>46</sup> They were mostly articles in leading journals like *al-Risāla*, *al-Shu'ūn al-Ijtimā'iyya*, *al-Ālam al-ʿArabī* and *al-Fikr al-Jadīd*. In *al-Shu'ūn al-Ijtimā'iyya*, for instance, Quṭb suggested several means of solving the economic crisis facing the Egyptian people, a change in their outlook on society. Quṭb had the view that the old mentality, which the Egyptians had inherited, was based on that of "masters and slaves". This, of course, would have a strong impact on Egyptian society, which was based on social classes such as the proletariat, the upper class and the bourgeoisie. Therefore there must be "a new mentality that accords with the legislation which claims that the Egyptian people are equal, and Egypt is for all, and the right to a better life is for all."<sup>47</sup>

Quṭb's book, which appeared in 1945, was *Ṭifl min al-Qarya*. It described the peasants' circumstances with some implied criticism. Though the book was an autobiography of Quṭb's childhood experiences, it indicated the author's concern with the social problems of Egypt. Quṭb described in *Ṭifl* how he felt compassion towards some workers, called *al-ghurb* (the strangers), who were employed annually on his father's land, where in return they were given meals and some money. Quṭb mentioned in his book how he learned many things from those workers' way of life and their struggle to earn enough money and food to support their families. He learned how meat became a rare item, to be eaten by them only during the Islamic festivals. Butter, too, was unknown in their world.<sup>48</sup> This experience, of course, made a deep impression on young Quṭb's mind as he saw that the coming of those poor workers into Mūshā cultivating his father's land was a kind of exploitation on them.

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<sup>46</sup> According to Muḥammad Jabr, a friend of Quṭb's at Cairo University, Quṭb's writing on the social and political issues began in 1928. However, we could not find any of Quṭb's articles during that period which could confirm such an assertion. See ʿAbd al-Bāqī Muḥammad Ḥusayn, *Sayyid Quṭb: Hayātuhu wa Adabuhu* (Manṣūra: Dār al-Wafā', 1993), 285.

<sup>47</sup> Ḥusayn, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 289.

<sup>48</sup> Quṭb, *Ṭifl*, 177.

Quṭb himself felt like an exploiter who “exploited those strangers and millions like them who planted the fields with gold, yet starved. If there was indeed a just law, he (Quṭb) should be led to prison before those defined by law as thieves and criminals.”<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps Quṭb’s childhood experiences, which he turned into a book in 1945, was a hint of his unhappiness with the social problems facing Egyptian society at that time. According to Musallam, Quṭb’s departure from Qur’ānic literary study to social criticism was the result of his earlier examination of the imagery used in the Qur’ān itself. In other words, the Qur’ān and its dialogue left their mark upon Quṭb’s mind, as he personally acknowledged in *Taṣwīr*. The more he read the Qur’ān and realized its artistic inimitability, the more the idea of writing an expanded study appealed to him.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the years between 1945 and 1949, before his departure for the United States, witnessed Quṭb’s open criticism of the political system of the Egyptian government, though, as a government officer, he was prohibited from writing on politics or analysing national issues. His continual activism against and criticism of un-Islamic governmental policies in education had also alienated him from his superiors in the ministry.<sup>51</sup>

These transformative years of Quṭb’s life, however, were not yet at an end. His interest in exposing the social and political milieu of Egyptian society motivated him, together with some of his close friends, to establish a journal, *al-Fikr al-Jadīd* (New Thought) in 1947. The journal aimed at spreading ideas and offering Islam as a solution to the current social problems. Quṭb’s main target was to expose the reality of the lives of those underprivileged masses who existed amid poverty and hunger in

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<sup>49</sup> Quṭb, *Tiḥl*, 178.

<sup>50</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 140.

<sup>51</sup> Muhammad Sohirin Solihin, *Studies on Sayyid Quṭb’s Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān* (unpublished Ph.D Thesis University of Birmingham, 1993), 14.



a society dominated by the landowning classes.<sup>52</sup> Among the hot topics discussed in the journals were: “*Laisa al-Sha‘b Mutasawwilān, Faruddū Ḥaqqahū wa Hua Ghaniyyun ‘an Birrikumī*” (Nations are not beggars. Give back their rights for they are in no need of your kindness) and “*Yā Shabāb al-Wādī Ta’ahhabū wa Ista‘iddū*” (O young men of the valley, be ready and prepare yourselves!). Perhaps it was because of the journal’s harsh criticism of the so-called aristocrats and current government that irritated King Farouq, who then demanded its closure. As a result, only six issues were produced before its demise in 1948 under the imposition of martial law.<sup>53</sup>

On 3 November 1948, Quṭb left Egypt for the United States to study modern systems of education and training.<sup>54</sup> His departure, however, was seen as a result of his severe criticism of the existing political authority which made the latter angry with Quṭb. In the words of Musallam:

the palace had become very impatient with Quṭb and had ordered the Prime Minister, Maḥmūd Fahmī al-Nuqrāshī, to arrest him. But al-Nuqrāshī, an associate of Quṭb in the Wafd and Sa’dist parties, manage to salvage the situation by ordering Quṭb’s superior at the Ministry of Education to send him abroad on an educational mission.<sup>55</sup>

Quṭb’s stay in the United States was one of the most fruitful periods in his life, for he started to appreciate Islamic values and way of life and to reject the Western way of thinking and its civilization. His article in *al-Risāla*, entitled *Amrīkā allatī Ra’aytu* (The America that I Saw), provided a clear picture of his experiences

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<sup>52</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 143.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 145. See also Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 191–192.

<sup>54</sup> Quṭb studied at Wilson’s Teachers’ college, Washington D.C. and later visited several other institutions in Colorado and California. See Ahmad Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Quṭb* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1992), 24–25.

<sup>55</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 190–191. See also Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 118–119.

and personal observations during his stay in that country.<sup>56</sup> Quṭb admitted in *Amrīkā* the advancement and achievement of the Western people, and the Americans in particular, in science and modern technology, which had brought them great material success. The Americans, Quṭb proclaimed, “are a nation achieving advancement and development in terms of science and production.”<sup>57</sup>

However, turning to questions of moral and spiritual well-being, Quṭb withheld his appreciation of the West, considering that the American success was not able to bring a peaceful life based on brotherhood and equality. In his view, the Americans were born in an environment of science and technology, which then became the main focus of their lives, and so religious principles were abandoned. Quṭb further stated:

When people start to close [their minds] from [focusing] on questions of belief in a religion, arts and spiritual values at large, there will therefore be no longer an authority who can activate them [again] unless into the field of science, technology and production and into [the field that] can bring an enjoyment of feeling...and this is what America has finally achieved.<sup>58</sup>

At this point one can see Quṭb’s interest in Islam develop as he began to feel the necessity of fulfilling spiritual and religious elements in human life in addition to achieving scientific breakthroughs. Although Quṭb did not reject science and technology as achieved by the Americans, in his view it was the lack of moral and spiritual well-being that made them neither at rest nor at peace with themselves. In describing Quṭb’s experience of American life, Mousalli writes that it made him realize that:

Western civilization was impoverished and was unable to provide fresh and new moral and political principles. For individual freedom was transformed

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<sup>56</sup> Ḥamūda, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 85.

<sup>57</sup> Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālidi, *Amrīkā minā’l-Dākhil bi Minzār Sayyid Quṭb* (Mansūra: Dār al-Wafā’, 1986), 99.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

into the freedom to pursue lusts and desires, and equality became unattainable because of the economic structure of the world. Furthermore, Westerners did not know what real fraternity meant; for real fraternity required, at least, the abandonment of narrow-minded nationalism. The solution to humanity's problems was in its return to God. God offered freedom which science could not.<sup>59</sup>

There was, of course, no limit to Quṭb's stay in America, for the scholarship granted to him was open and he could even have studied for a Ph.D if he had so wished. This was due to the Egyptian government's intention to impress American culture upon him.<sup>60</sup> In fact, his experience in the United States drove him closer to Islam, and then to the Ikhwān.

According to Mousalli, there were two important events that made Quṭb consider joining the Ikhwān:

The first was the happy and joyous American reception in 1949 of the assassination of Ḥasan al-Bannā...The second was his meeting with a British agent, identified by Quṭb as James Heyworth-Dunne, who told him that the Muslim Brethren [the Ikhwān] was the only movement that stood as barrier to Western civilization in the East.<sup>61</sup>

These two incidents left a deep impression upon Quṭb's mind and motivated him to study al-Bannā and the Ikhwān in greater depth. In addition, the Ikhwān was the only movement, in Quṭb's view, that had a strong intellectual and political influence in Egypt at that time. Its struggle against British infiltration and its rejection of Western civilization increased Quṭb's interest, for he himself had observed the American way of life, which he had described earlier in *al-Risāla*.

Quṭb returned to Egypt in 1950 after two years in the United States. His return to Egypt perhaps signified his symbolic return to Islam as a comprehensive way of life. The publication of his work *al-ʿAdāla* in 1949 clearly exemplified the

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<sup>59</sup> Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, 26.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 30. According to Khālidī, Quṭb witnessed the outbursts of joy among the Americans on the assassination of al-Bannā while he was getting a treatment in a hospital in San Francisco. See Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 199–200.



first phase of his new intellectual quest.<sup>62</sup> At this stage he was still independent and his close association with the Ikhwān in early 1951 was inspired merely by his sympathy towards the organization itself. Upon his return, Quṭb was approached by Ikhwān members, who asked him to co-operate in writing some articles for the organization's journals such as *al-Da'wa* (The Call) and *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* (The Muslim Brothers). According to Kepel, Quṭb ultimately devoted himself to the Ikhwān late in 1951, when he was 45.<sup>63</sup>

It is also important to note that on Quṭb's return there was a close association between the Ikhwān and the Free Officers in their intention of overthrowing the monarchy and the liberal nationalist regime. Despite different ideological principles (Socialism versus Islam), the growing crisis in Egyptian politics and the economy had led them to agree to co-operate in the struggle for unity and justice for the Egyptian people. In describing the social and political sphere of Egyptian society after World War II, Mitchell wrote that the crisis in the country grew worse and greatly affected the economic, political, and social life of the Egyptian people. More importantly, it "had manifold consequences for both the momentum and the direction of the national movement."<sup>64</sup> Therefore, "an agreement of sort" was reached later on between the Free Officers and the Ikhwān concerning the latter's role on the day of the revolution. This agreement "attempted to foresee all the possible contingencies in which a well-disciplined, well-trained civil army could be of use."<sup>65</sup>

The revolution of July 1952 saw Quṭb's emergence as one of its important figures. He played a vital role in influencing the people of the country and gaining their support. According to Maḥmūd al-Azab, an Egyptian military officer working

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<sup>62</sup> Ibrahim Abu Rabi', "Sayyid Quṭb: From Religious Realism to Radical Social Criticism," *Islamic Quarterly* 24 (1984): 106.

<sup>63</sup> Kepel, *Muslim Extremism*, 41.

<sup>64</sup> R. Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 35.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

at Port Said, Quṭb played an instrumental role in the preparations. On the eve of the revolution, he commanded those military officers to be fully prepared. While attending the meeting held at Quṭb's house, Maḥmud al-Azab found that some of the revolutionary leaders were also there, including Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir.<sup>66</sup>

In additions to his direct participation in the 1952 revolution, Quṭb also wrote books and articles criticizing the corrupt royal government, feudalism and capitalism. His books such as *Maʿrakat al-Islām wa-l-Raʿsmaliyya* (The Struggle between Islam and Capitalism) and *al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī wa'l-Islām* (World Peace and Islam) clearly affirmed the capacity of Islam as an appropriate and desirable ideology for the world of the mid-twentieth century.<sup>67</sup> Quṭb wrote in *Maʿrakat*, for instance: “the deterioration in social conditions from which the masses of Egypt suffer cannot continue indefinitely... This is a fact that should be known by all.”<sup>68</sup>

Quṭb's position in the Ikhwān at this stage, however, was that of a thinker in the organization and editor of the Ikhwān's newspapers. His rise in the organization can be traced only to late 1952, when he was elected a member of the Ikhwān leadership council (*maktab al-irshād*) and was named head of the propaganda section (*nashr al-daʿwa*).<sup>69</sup> This section, as Mitchell notes, was able “to make use of talent available to it among its professional members in the fields of law, economics, society, education, chemistry, engineering, and zoology.”<sup>70</sup>

In 1954, when the central council office decided to republish the Ikhwān weekly journal *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, Quṭb was chosen editor-in-chief.<sup>71</sup> He also

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<sup>66</sup> Khālīdī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 130.

<sup>67</sup> Charles Tripp, “Sayyid Quṭb: The Political Vision,” in *Pioneers of Islamic Revivals*, ed. Ali Rahnema (1994), 158.

<sup>68</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Maʿrakat al-Islām wa'l-Raʿsmaliyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993), 5.

<sup>69</sup> Ṣalāḥ Shādī, *al-Shahīdāni: Ḥasan al-Bannā wa Sayyid Quṭb* (Manṣūra: Dār al-Wafāʾ, 1994), 55–56.

<sup>70</sup> Mitchell, *Society*, 189.

<sup>71</sup> Shādī, *al-Shahīdāni*, 56.

represented the Ikhwān at many conferences held within and outside Egypt, representing the Ikhwān. In December 1953, for instance, he attended a conference on sociological studies as well as an Islamic Conference held in the city of Quds (Jerusalem).<sup>72</sup>

In 1954, two years after the revolution, the relationship between the Ikhwān and the new regime seemed to deteriorate as the Ikhwān gradually became disillusioned with the regime's emphasis on Egyptian nationalism rather than Islam as the governing system of the country. This could be seen with the arrest of a thousand Ikhwān members, including Quṭb. The main reason given was the Ikhwān's conspiracy to overthrow the Nasserite government as well as their attempt to assassinate Nasser himself. As Kepel writes, "Whether it was a police provocation or a deliberate act, the attack gave the president the perfect excuse for finishing off the Muslim Brethren."<sup>73</sup> On 13 July 1955, after a farcical trial, Quṭb was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, during which he completed his major work, *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur'ān* (In the Shade of the Qur'ān) as well as several other works.<sup>74</sup>

In 1964, Quṭb was released after the intercession of President ʿAbd al-Salām ʿĀrif of Iraq, who was on a state visit to Egypt. Quṭb was, however, rearrested a few months later accused of plotting against the regime. In fact, his release in 1964 was followed by the publication of his controversial work, *Maʿālim fī'l-Ṭarīq*, which was used by the regime as the main item of evidence in his 1966 trial for conspiracy to overthrow the regime. On 29 August 1966, Quṭb was executed along with two other members of the Ikhwān, ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Ismāʿīl and Muḥammad Yūsuf Ḥawwāsh. Their execution sent the Ikhwān underground for several years.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 144.

<sup>73</sup> Kepel, *Muslim Extremism*, 41.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 41–42.

<sup>75</sup> Abu Rabiʿ, "Sayyid Quṭb: From Religious Realism," 106.



Quṭb's death in 1966 left behind him his scholarly works, which still influenced new generations of Islamic intellectuals. The republication of his works and their translation into several languages clearly signify the importance of his thought and his life within the intellectual sphere of Muslims and Western non-Muslims.

Quṭb's books and articles can be divided into literature, education, and socio-economic and religio-political thought. His works on literature were written mainly in the 1930s to 1940s, and include his early major works, *Muhimmat al-Shāir fī'l-Hayāh* (Significance of the Poet in Life) (1932) and several others such as *al-Shāfī' al-Majhūl* (The Unknown Beach) (1934), *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī'l-Qur'ān* (Artistic Imagery in the Qur'ān) (1945), and *Mashāhid al-Qiyāma fī'l-Qur'ān* (Scenes of the Day of Resurrection in the Qur'ān) (1947). Quṭb's works on education include *al-Qiṣaṣ al-Dīnī* (Religious Stories), *al-Jadīd fī'l-Lughat al-<sup>c</sup>Arabiyya* (A Novelty in Arabic Language), *Rawḍat al-Ṭifl* (The Nursery School) and *al-Jadīd fī'l-Mahfūzāt* (A Novelty in Memorized poetry).<sup>76</sup>

Quṭb's writings on socio-economic and religio-political topics began after World War II, and his first Islamic work, *al-<sup>c</sup>Adāla al-Ijtimā'īyya fī'l-Islām* (Social Justice in Islam), was published in 1948. This was followed by *Ma'rakat al-Islām wa'l-Ra'smāliyya* (Islam's Battle with Capitalism) and *al-Salām al-<sup>c</sup>Ālamī wa'l-Islām* (Islam and Universal Peace) in 1951. These works focus mainly on Islam as the solution to the problems facing society such as social injustice, corruption and feudalism. During his period in prison between 1954 and 1964, Quṭb was able to complete the writing of *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* (In the Shade of the Qur'ān) together with other Islamic books: *Hādha al-Dīn* (This Religion of Islam) (1955), *al-Mustaqbal li Hādha al-Dīn* (The Future Belongs to This Religion) (1956) and *Khaṣā'iṣ al-Taṣawwūr al-Islāmī wa Muqawwamātuh* (The Characteristics and Components of the

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<sup>76</sup> Most of these works are textbooks written for the Ministry of Education. See Musallam, *The Formative Stage*, 96.



Islamic Concept) (1960). Among all his scholarly works, *Zilāl*, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, became the most widely circulated. Furthermore, Quṭb's critical discussion in his *Zilāl* covered all his previous Islamic orientation and ideas from the early 1940s up to the 1950s. After his release in 1964, his most controversial work *Ma'ālim fi'l-Ṭarīq* was published. This book became one of the most important factors that led to Quṭb's execution two years later, because its content was said to have exhorted people to act against the current government of Egypt.

### 1.3 Twentieth Century Muslim Thought

#### 1.3.1 Introduction

This section examines the intellectual environment inside and outside Egypt which influenced Quṭb so much during his formative years and which resulted in profound changes in his intellectual and political outlook. Earlier we mentioned names like al-ʿAqqād, who became Quṭb's mentor in exposing him to literature and political views. However, the discussion here, besides giving a detailed account of al-ʿAqqād's influence on Quṭb's intellectual thinking, will examine several other figures like al-Bannā and al-Mawdūdī, who shaped Quṭb's intellectual and political world-view of the situation in contemporary Egyptian society.

There are, in fact, numerous well-known figures of the twentieth century whom Quṭb clearly mentioned in many of his writings. Our discussion will, however, be limited into the above-mentioned people, who were regarded as having a strong influence on Quṭb's thought on literary views, socio-political issues and Islam.

#### 1.3.2 Al-ʿAqqād and the *Dīwān* school of poetry

ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād (1899–1964) was one of the most important figures in the first half of the twentieth century. His importance stemmed from the fact that he was a famous Egyptian thinker, literary critic, modernist and outspoken journalist

who participated in the political struggle from the 1920s to the early 1940s for independence from British rule. During those years, he joined the Wafd party under the leadership of Saʿd Zaghlūl and devoted his talents to the cause of the party. His support of the party ended with the death of Saʿd Zaghlūl, for he was disillusioned with the new party leader, Naḥḥās Pāshā, whom he considered more inclined to demagoguery than to democracy.<sup>77</sup>

Al-ʿAqqād's early years in Aswan, where he was born, saw his exposure to Western language and culture. This was due to the many British communities living there and working on the construction of the Aswan Dam. Therefore it enabled him to keep in touch with them and gain access to English books and magazines. It also gave al-ʿAqqād the opportunity to learn English language and culture, which led him finally to be influenced by English writers like Hazlitt, Coleridge, Macaulay, Arnold and Darwin.<sup>78</sup>

Al-ʿAqqād distinguished himself from other Egyptian thinkers in that he firmly believed that reason and intellect alone guided men's actions. His tendencies were more towards secular ideas such as individualism and liberalism, which, from his viewpoint, could bring to men intellectual and cultural liberty. Many of his writings clearly exemplified his thought, for he focused much on the significance of an individual and his social and political role.<sup>79</sup> As an Egyptian thinker striving for a better life for the Egyptian nation, al-ʿAqqād saw European society as the ideal.<sup>80</sup> This perhaps was the result of his long devotion to Western writing and literature during his early years at Aswan.

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<sup>77</sup> Kepel, *Muslim Extremism*, 39. Al-ʿAqqād also saw Naḥḥās Pāshā as someone who was not sincere in his struggle for the Egyptian people. See Ghāzī Tauba, *al-Fikr al-Islāmī al-Muʿāṣir* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1977), 128.

<sup>78</sup> Tauba, *al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, 127.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 129–133.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 134–137.

In al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād's view, the democratic system applied by Europe and the Western countries ought to be applied to Egyptian society because it would give individuals their freedom of right in the governmental system of the country and later bring the country towards material and intellectual development. Al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād wrote in *al-Risāla* in 1943 of his support of the democratic system: "I [personally] support democracy because it protects the individual freedom and improves human life."<sup>81</sup>

In his literary career, al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād seems to have been a man of vision. He believed that the real function of the poet was to serve as the intermediary between life and its people. Therefore in his view poetry and other literary works were not a form of entertainment but a faithful interpretation of life.<sup>82</sup> Here he clearly opposed neo-classical poetry and its protagonists such as Aḥmad Shawqī (1869–1932) and several others who were considered static in their poetry.<sup>83</sup> According to al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād, the poetry of Aḥmad Shawqī and his associates did not have characteristics that could bring much benefit to the public and make sense to its mind. Their poetry focused more on describing and comparing things, such as likening the shape or colour of one object to another, without giving attention to the current issues and the poets' personal expression of them. "A true poet", al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād added, "is not necessary to show what objects look like but to express his peculiar mode of perception and his attitude to life."<sup>84</sup>

Al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād's condemnation of Aḥmad Shawqī's poetry could be seen in his book *al-Dīwān*. Here, he quoted several verses of Shawqī's poetry to show the latter's weakness in poetic expression. This included the use of a functional simile by Shawqī, where a train was equated with rain simply because both words were derived from the same Arabic root (*qīṭār* and *qaṭr*). In al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād's view, this kind of

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<sup>81</sup> Tauba, *al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, 134.

<sup>82</sup> D. Semah, *Four Egyptian Literary Critics* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 3.

<sup>83</sup> Musallam, "Prelude to Islamic Commitment," 178.

<sup>84</sup> Semah, *Four Egyptian literary Critics*, 20.



simile revealed nothing and could not be understood by the ordinary men. A functional simile, he added, should be used in genuine poetry to communicate to readers the totality of the associations created by the objects being compared and to evoke in them the appropriate emotions.<sup>85</sup>

When examining Egyptian society and the literary circles in particular of the 1920s and 1930s, one would find that al-<sup>°</sup>Aqqād's condemnation of the neo-classicists and their poetry was motivated by many factors. These included his personal background, where he received more exposure to European literature such as French, Italian and English, compared with his predecessors. Such exposure as some of them had was to French literature and did not go beyond that. An example was Aḥmad Shawqī, who studied law in France.<sup>86</sup> This exposure had a strong influence on al-<sup>°</sup>Aqqād's way of thinking, and ideas such as liberalism and individualism were widely emphasized in his writings and poetry. Secondly, al-<sup>°</sup>Aqqād's close association with the Nationalist leaders such Sa<sup>°</sup>d Zaghlūl and his participation in the Wafd's struggle for Egyptian independence enabled him to see how individuals had a significant role to play in the social and political struggle of their country. This experience, perhaps, was not much perceived by Aḥmad Shawqī in particular, whose life was closely associated with the palace, for he himself was a staunch supporter of the Khedive and the Ottoman Sultan.<sup>87</sup>

In describing the new generation of the poets represented by al-<sup>°</sup>Aqqād and his groups, Vatikiotis writes:

They criticized their predecessors for being blind panegyrists of court and social occasions; for their emulation of the classics; for their adherence to and interest in the linguistic gyrations of classical Arabic forms; and generally for their lachrymose romanticism and oozing lyricism. The new school combined a new Egyptian nationalist concern with a more existential

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<sup>85</sup> Semah, *Four Egyptian Literary Critics*, 20.

<sup>86</sup> Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt*, 481–482.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 481.



poetic approach, and an interest in expressing universal meaning-if not truth. Poetry was to be a personal expression of the poet, not a panegyric of authority or a vehicle of social preaching. Moreover, several of these new poets were also critics and prominent prose writers.<sup>88</sup>

In the view of Musallam, al-°Aqqād's Dīwān school was distinguished from other schools of poetry in the sense that it viewed poetry as something "subjective, a reflection of the heart and an interpreter of the soul, not merely an outer description of a thing."<sup>89</sup> This view was often reflected in his literary battles against his contemporaries, especially regarding the future of the Egyptian people at the cultural and intellectual level, and the intellectuals' role in guiding people towards the achievement of their national contribution to civilization.

It was in the late thirties that al-°Aqqād turned to liberalism and joined with other literati in the religious camp. There were many reasons for the renewed interest among those writers in Islamic writings, among which were the rise of nationalism and corrupt political parties.<sup>90</sup> Following this development, many Islamic works were produced by al-°Aqqād such as *°Abqariyyat Muḥammad*, *°Abqariyyat °Umar*, *al-Islām fī 'l-Qarn al-°Isyrīn*, *al-Insān fī 'l-Qur'ān al-Karīm* and so forth.<sup>91</sup>

Al-°Aqqād's influence on Quṭb's intellectual development began in the early 1920s when the latter moved to Cairo to live with his uncle, Ḥusayn. There, Quṭb was introduced to al-°Aqqād, who was already famous in both poetry and criticism. According to Khālidī, there are several reasons for the increase in Quṭb's association with al-°Aqqād. Firstly, Quṭb was living with his uncle, Ḥusayn, who was already close friends with al-°Aqqād, for both were Wafdists and journalists. Secondly, Uncle Ḥusayn's residence itself was close to al-°Aqqād's residence. This closeness of course enabled Quṭb to visit al-°Aqqād frequently. Thirdly, al-°Aqqād's personality

<sup>88</sup> Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt*, 482.

<sup>89</sup> Musallam, "Prelude to Islamic Commitment," 178.

<sup>90</sup> Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, 58.

<sup>91</sup> Tauba, *al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, 143-144.

and his talent in literary works and criticism attracted Quṭb so much that he then began to admire al-°Aqqād and read his works.<sup>92</sup>

Quṭb's association with al-°Aqqād also enabled him to read Western books on various subjects such as literature (including poetry), history, philosophy, psychology and education, since many of them were available in al-°Aqqād's personal library.<sup>93</sup> In addition, Quṭb was a loyal reader of al-°Aqqād's writings, judging by his enthusiasm in reading all the articles and books written by his mentor.<sup>94</sup> Thus, al-°Aqqād's secular ideas such as liberalism, individualism and modernism as reflected in his writings gradually influenced Quṭb's as he began to realize how reason and intellect could guide human action. Quṭb did admit to this development when he stated that al-°Aqqād helped him to focus on the thought rather than the utterance (*al-°ināya bi'l-fikr akthar mina'l-lafẓ*).<sup>95</sup>

Perhaps it was during this stage that Quṭb appeared to be greatly influenced by the Western way of thinking and became acquainted with its civilization. This can be seen from his later writings in which he mentioned Western writers like T.W. Arnold (1864–1930), Henri Bergson (1859–1941) and the English poet Thomas Hardy (1840–1928). In his novel *Ashwāk*, for instance, Quṭb used ideas like existentialism, scepticism and liberalism, which indicated his Westernized tendencies.<sup>96</sup> As Haddad writes, Quṭb's association with al-°Aqqād had exposed him to Western sources and made him “extremely interested in English literature and read avidly anything he could lay his hands on in translation.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-Milād*, 136.

<sup>93</sup> Khalidi, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 163.

<sup>94</sup> Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-Milād*, 137.

<sup>95</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 77.

<sup>97</sup> Yvonne Y. Haddad, “Sayyid Quṭb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival,” in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 69. See also Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 163.

Al-°Aqqād's influence on Quṭb's thought had also enabled the latter to realize the meaning of political struggle in the country in a true sense. Although the fact that Quṭb's concern for social and political problems had developed during his years in Mūshā, as described in *Ṭifl min al-Qarya*, it was al-°Aqqād, who shaped and prepared Quṭb to analyse critically the social and political situation in his country. Musallam noted this development, saying that when Quṭb left Mūshā around 1921, "he was a highly literate and politically conscientious young man with a mission in life, which had been engraved in his consciousness from the age of ten."<sup>98</sup>

As a student of al-°Aqqād's school, Quṭb became highly impressed by the personality and political thought of its leader. This included al-°Aqqād's outlook on the Western parliamentary system and his preference for democracy to any other ideologies like Marxism and communism. To al-°Aqqād, democracy as applied in the West gave an individual a full right in the government.<sup>99</sup> Quṭb also became impressed with al-°Aqqād's political role as such in the 1919–1922 revolution and his literary contribution to the nationalist struggle of that time, in which he aimed at implanting an awareness of nationalism in the minds of the Egyptians. Thus Quṭb's years with al-°Aqqād had opened his eyes and made him realize that, as a literary critic, he too had a role to play in finding solutions to the problems of the Egyptian social and political milieu.<sup>100</sup> Following both his uncle and mentor, Quṭb joined the Wafd Party and became an active member. Quṭb devoted himself to working for the party for almost twenty years, including writing poetry and essays for the party's

<sup>98</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 76.

<sup>99</sup> Tauba, *al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, 134–135.

<sup>100</sup> Husayn, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 61.



newspaper, *al-Balāgh*.<sup>101</sup> Quṭb left the Wafd Party in 1942 when Muṣṭafā Naḥḥās became its leader.<sup>102</sup>

As mentioned earlier Quṭb had been a devoted student of al-°Aqqād since his early years in Cairo. From the period spent at Dār al-°Ulūm to the middle of the 1940s, Quṭb joined al-°Aqqād in literary battles against the latter's literary rivals such as al-Rāfi°ī and several others among the neo-classicists. Quṭb's critical writings against al-Rāfi°ī appeared mainly in *al-Risāla*, where his method of criticism clearly relied on the thought of al-°Aqqād.<sup>103</sup> Describing al-°Aqqād's influence on his thought in literary work, Quṭb mentioned to al-Nadwī, who visited him in 1951, that:

There is no doubt that I am a disciple of al-°Aqqād both in literature and in literary style. It is to him that I owe my ability to think clearly; he stopped me from imitating al-Manfalūṭī and al-Rāfi°ī... Al-°Aqqād is a man of pure intellect; he will only examine a problem through reason and intellect, so I proceeded to quench my thirst at other springs nearer the spirit. I then took the trouble to study the poetry of Orientals such as Tagore. I used to believe moreover that someone like al-°Aqqād, with his great wisdom and personality, would not submit to such necessities and confusions as the government and the authorities, but he reconciled himself to them.<sup>104</sup>

In 1946 Quṭb dissociated himself completely from al-°Aqqād and his school. Besides al-°Aqqād's apparent tolerance of the government's attitude towards social and political problems, Quṭb's distance from his mentor was also due to his gradual interest in spiritual themes in poetry and other literary works. This, of course, differed from his mentor, al-°Aqqād, who was still firmly convinced that reason and

<sup>101</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 77.

<sup>102</sup> According to Khālidī, Quṭb became angry with the party leadership under Muṣṭafā Naḥḥās who formed the new government under the shadow of British interest. See Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb: mina'l-Milād*, 265–266. On the new Wafd government and their pro-British policy-making, see Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt*, 350–356.

<sup>103</sup> Solihin, *Studies on Sayyid Quṭb*, 23.

<sup>104</sup> See Sylvia G Haim, "Sayyid Quṭb," *Asian and African Studies* 16 (1982): 148–149. See also Solihin, *Studies on Sayyid Quṭb*, 23.



intellect alone could guide men's action by ignoring spiritual values. Quṭb admitted this new transformation in his literary career during his conversation with al-Nadwī:

Al-°Aqqād is inclined towards using purely intellectual thought and does not approach specific issues or discuss them unless through intellect and reason alone. It was therefore my personal quest to find another mode of thinking which is closer to the spirit.<sup>105</sup>

At this point, Quṭb's latest interest might have been the result of his six years, work on a literary study of the Qur'ān, beginning in 1939 and ending with the publication of his book, *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī'l- Qur'ān*, in 1945. This is because his separation from al-°Aqqād began in 1946 and signified that his literary analysis of artistic imagery and portrayal in the Qur'ān had provided him with a new direction in literary work: the search for spiritual values. According to Musallam, Quṭb did admit that "the Qur'ān, more than any other single factor, was instrumental in leading him out of the turbulence he experienced in his fruitless search for the infinite into a strong belief in the Islamic way of life."<sup>106</sup>

### 1.3.3 Ḥasan al-Bannā and the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn

Ḥasan al-Bannā (d.1949) can be considered one of the important Muslim figures during the formative phase of Islamic resurgence in the modern Arab world in general and Egypt in particular. His ideas on and contribution to the debate of the Islamic revivalism in the 1920s, as Abu Rabi° writes, "must be understood as that of a religious-minded and rising middle-class intellectual of the Third World labouring under the impact of cultural Westernization and political weakness at home."<sup>107</sup>

<sup>105</sup> See Solihin, *Studies on Sayyid Quṭb*, 23.

<sup>106</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 130.

<sup>107</sup> Ibrahim Abu Rabi°, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 64.

Born in the provincial town of al-Maḥmūdiyya, in the district of Rashīd, al-Bannā started his early education at the village's religious school, the *kuttāb*. At the age of twelve he began studying at the *Madrasa al-Nizāmiyya* before attending the Primary Teachers' Training School at Damanhūr. In 1923, he moved to Cairo to complete his studies in education at Dār al-ʿUlūm's teachers' college. In 1927, after graduating from Dār al-ʿUlūm, al-Bannā began his career as a government teacher in Ismāʿīliyya province.<sup>108</sup>

During his years at Dār al-ʿUlūm in Cairo al-Bannā appears to have been greatly influenced by the ideas of Muslim modernists such as Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā, especially their exposure of the danger of Westernization to Muslim society.<sup>109</sup> In describing al-Bannā's life at Dār al-ʿUlūm, Mitchell writes that it enabled him to see "the defection of 'educated youth' from the Islamic way of life."<sup>110</sup> This new phenomenon facing the Egyptians and the youth in particular, was due to two main reasons: an imitation of the Western way of life and culture on the one side and the lack of the *ʿulamā*'s role in implanting Islamic awareness in society on the other. The situation worsened when there were publicized views of Western educated figures like Ṭāhā Hussayn, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal and Salama Mūsā, who saw a religious life to mean backwardness and opposition to a modern civilization.<sup>111</sup>

The continuing social problems facing the country had also caused al-Bannā to feel disillusioned with the *ʿulamā*' of al-Azhar, who, from his viewpoint, should also be held responsible for all the contemporary problems facing Muslim society. In

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<sup>108</sup> Shādī, , *al-Shahīdāni*, 11.

<sup>109</sup> Selma Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution, 1919–1952* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 120.

<sup>110</sup> Mitchell, *Society*, 5. For detailed information about al-Bannā's early experiences in Cairo and his exposure to secularism and Westernization which had been unknown to him before, see also Lia Brynjar, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998), 27–30.

<sup>111</sup> Shādī, *al-Shahīdāni*, 12–13.

this regard, they seemed to care more about their personal welfare than promoting the general well-being of the Egyptian Muslims, who were in need of spiritual guidance.<sup>112</sup> There were also among the *‘ulamā*’ those who chose to co-operate with the current government, considering that such a policy was for the social, political and economic betterment of the Egyptians. As Abu Rabi<sup>c</sup> notes, these Muslim religious authorities “had allied themselves with the colonists, and this situation wreaked havoc in the world of Islam...This alliance with the exploiters is just a reflection of their choice of selfish interests and worldly ambition over the welfare of the country and the nation.”<sup>113</sup>

These developments gradually created doubts and suspicion in the mind of al-Bannā about the efficacy of the Azhar to offer even the necessary remedies to the afflicted Muslims. He therefore decided that it was the time to act and establish a new organization capable of meeting the demands of contemporary life.<sup>114</sup>

In Ismā‘īliyya, al-Bannā began to play an active part in the social life of the local community. He gave religious lectures in mosques and schools, explaining to the local community about the existing problems facing the Muslim *Umma* and later asking them to return to Islam as the way of life. During this time, he also became aware of foreign infiltration, such as the British military camp and the Suez Canal Company that was wholly owned by foreigners.<sup>115</sup> The very presence of those foreigners, in his view, drove Muslim people away from Islam and colonized their minds with the Western way of life. This could be considered among the major factors that led al-Bannā to establish the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn in 1928, with the aim

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<sup>112</sup> Shādī, *al-Shahīdāni*, 14.

<sup>113</sup> Abu Rabi<sup>c</sup>, *Intellectual Origins*, 75. See also Shādī, *al-Shahīdāni*, 14.

<sup>114</sup> Abu Rabi<sup>c</sup>, *Intellectual Origins*, 75.

<sup>115</sup> Mitchell, *Society*, 7.

of instilling the truth, propagating Islam as a faith and an ideology and disseminating Islamic knowledge throughout Muslim society.<sup>116</sup>

In 1932, al-Bannā, who was now the supreme leader of the Ikhwān, moved to Cairo, where his personality and religious commitment attracted both lower and middle class people. His message was that Islam was both a religion and a universal faith with a strong sense of ideological mission.<sup>117</sup> In a short time, as Botman points out, al-Bannā successfully developed a political organization that posed a great challenge to the secular government and directly opposed Western standards of behaviour.<sup>118</sup> From the 1930s to the 1940s the Ikhwān was particularly strong. Besides taking part in demonstrations and protests against the existing authority, the Ikhwān also joined the Arab forces in the war between the Palestinians and the Israelis.<sup>119</sup> However it is important to note that the strength and popularity of the Ikhwān during these years were very much due to the personality of its founder, al-Bannā. The assassination of al-Bannā in 1949 sent the organization underground for several years.<sup>120</sup>

The influence of al-Bannā and his Ikhwān on Quṭb's Islamic thought was considerable, especially in the late 1940s and the early 1950s. This was the period when Quṭb changed his career from that of a literary man into a committed Muslim writer and thinker who devoted the rest of his life to Islam with his writings and direct participation in the Ikhwān. More importantly, Quṭb also changed his secular lifestyle to one based on Islam, which he followed till his death in 1966.

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<sup>116</sup> Abu Rabi', *Intellectual Origins*, 75–76.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>118</sup> Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution*, 120.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 123.



There are many similarities between al-Bannā and Quṭb. Both were born in 1906, both grew up in religious families, graduated from Dār al-‘Ulūm, served as government teachers in their early careers and devoted their lives to Islam till their tragic deaths. Al-Bannā was assassinated in 1949 and Quṭb was executed in 1966.<sup>121</sup> The difference between both figures is that Quṭb’s commitment to Islam began in the late 1940s. This means that he was still immersed in the world of literature, defending his mentor al-‘Aqqād against other literary figures, whereas al-Bannā had already established and was participating in various Islamic reform societies such as the Society of Moral Behaviour (*Jam‘iyyat al-Akhlāq al-Islāmiyya*) and the Society for the Prevention of the Forbidden (*Jam‘iyyat Man‘ al-muḥarramāt*).<sup>122</sup>

It was the personality of al-Bannā and the Ikhwān that contributed to Quṭb’s orientation to Islam. This can be seen from Quṭb’s dedication in his first Islamic work, *al-‘Adālā*:

To the youngsters whom I see in my fantasy coming to restore this religion anew like when it first began... fighting for the cause of Allah by killing and by getting killed, believing in the bottom of their hearts that the glory belongs to Allah, to His Prophet and to the believers... To those youngsters whom I do not doubt for a moment will be revived by the strong spirit of Islam from past generations to future generations in the very near future.<sup>123</sup>

Though writers like Khālidī<sup>124</sup> and Musallam<sup>125</sup> have the view that the dedication was not for Ikhwān members because Quṭb was still taking an independent path during 1948, it could still be regarded as a hint of his interest in joining the organization. This is because in the years before leaving for America,

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<sup>121</sup> Shādī, *al-Shahīdāni*, 5.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.. On al-Bannā’s participation in Islamic activities, see Brynjar, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, 27 and 46.

<sup>123</sup> Shādī, *al-Shahīdāni*, 6.

<sup>124</sup> Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-Milād*, 314–315.

<sup>125</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 191–192.

Quṭb had become disillusioned with the existing political parties, which, in his opinion, lacked a constructive policy, aimed at the realization of social justice and the rejuvenation of Egyptian society. In 1945, for example, Quṭb wrote in *al-Risāla* that the Egyptian people were in need of new parties having a constructive mentality and more concern for correcting the unequal distribution of wealth through educational policies.<sup>126</sup> Therefore his mention of “youngsters” struggling for the sake of God should be seen as his new Islamic tendency and his pride in an Islamic organization promoting the reform of their society on the basis of Islam. That was why after its publication in April 1949, *al-‘Adāla* was immediately confiscated by the authorities, believing that the book was dedicated to the Ikhwān, which, at that time, was extremely vigorous in its activities against the government.<sup>127</sup>

Although Quṭb never met al-Bannā, he did follow the news of al-Bannā’s activities with the Ikhwān. Moreover, Quṭb’s ideas, which appeared in *al-‘Adāla*, were in many ways similar to those which had been argued by al-Bannā and the Ikhwān from the 1930s to the 1940s. That was why, upon reading *al-‘Adāla*, al-Bannā stated: “These are our ideas and there is no doubt that its author is one of us.”<sup>128</sup>

Quṭb’s official association with the Ikhwān began in 1951 after his return from America. In this regard, al-Bannā’s personality and his assassination were among the major factors that led him to devote himself to the organization. Upon hearing of al-Bannā’s death in 1949, Quṭb, who was receiving medical treatment for a health problem in a San Francisco hospital, noticed that the hospital staff were overjoyed at the news. This experience propelled him in a new direction in his career: the need to associate with the Ikhwān and to co-operate with them with the

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<sup>126</sup> Adnan Musallam, “Sayyid Quṭb and Social justice, 1945–1948,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 4:1 (1993): 56–57.

<sup>127</sup> Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb: mina’l-Milād*, 316.

<sup>128</sup> Shādī, *al-Shahīdāni*, 7.

aim of realizing his ideas of social justice.<sup>129</sup> The appearance of the second edition of *al-ʿAdāla* in 1951 indicated clearly Quṭb’s close association with the Ikhwān, for he had changed his dedication to read:

To the youngsters whom I used to see in my fantasy coming but have found them in real life existing...striving for Allah with their possessions and their lives, believing profoundly that glory belongs to Allah and to His Prophet and to the believers<sup>130</sup>

In addition to al-Bannā’s assassination, Quṭb’s stay in America encouraged him to find out more about al-Bannā and the Ikhwān’s activities. His meeting with the British writer, James Heyworth-Dunne, was clear evidence of the Western attitude when the latter told him that al-Bannā and the Ikhwān had become a barrier to Western civilization in Egypt. These two events increased Quṭb’s interest in the Ikhwān and motivated him to study the organization, including its late supreme leader, Ḥasan al-Bannā.<sup>131</sup>

Quṭb’s orientation to the Ikhwān should also be examined within the context of the social and political development of Egyptian society. The continuing social problems in Egypt coupled with the failure of the existing political parties to solve them led Quṭb to return to Islam as he did in *al-ʿAdāla*. In this regard, Quṭb found the Ikhwān had characteristics similar to those which he wished to promote in correcting the social and economic disparity of Egyptian society. As Tripp wrote:

The Ikhwān’s activism, both in the Palestine war and in the attacks on British military installations in the Suez Canal Zone, clearly impressed Sayyid Quṭb and led him to believe that the Muslim Brotherhood combined the virtues that he was to extol at length in his later writings.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Shādī, *al-Shahīdānī*, 7.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Khālīdī, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 136.

<sup>132</sup> Tripp, “Sayyid Quṭb: The Political Vision,” 158–159.

### 1.3.4 Al-Mawdūdī and the Jamāʿat al-Islāmi Movement

Abū'l-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī (1903–1979), the founder of the Jamāʿat al-Islāmi movement in Pakistan, was another important figure of the twentieth-century Islamic resurgence. His ideas and thought on Islam, in addition to his political participation in the creation of Pakistan, had attracted attention outside the Indian Sub-continent, especially in other Muslim countries.<sup>133</sup>

Coming from a religious family, al-Mawdūdī began his early education with his father, who was known for his strictness in bringing up his children and his opposition to Western culture and education.<sup>134</sup> After the death of his father, al-Mawdūdī joined his brother in journalism in 1918. This year witnessed the beginnings of the National Movement in India, which encouraged al-Mawdūdī to take part in the nationalist struggle against British penetration.<sup>135</sup>

From 1924, he served as editor of several journals such as the weekly *Tāj* and *al-Jāmiʿa*<sup>136</sup> for about ten years before turning to devote himself to Islamic issues and the Muslim *Umma* in particular.<sup>137</sup> It was during the editorship of the *al-Jāmiʿa* that a great change took place in him as a result of an incident in 1926. Swami Shardhanand, a leader of the Shudhi (an extremist Hindu revivalist movement) was assassinated by a Muslim. In describing the incident, Adam writes:

The murder provoked a great public outcry, and criticisms of Islam and the Muslims began to appear in the public press. There were accusations that Islam relies upon the sword for its propagation, charges of bloodthirstiness,

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<sup>133</sup> Charles J. Adams, "Mawdudi and the Islamic State," *Voice of Resurgent Islam*, ed. J.L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 99.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>135</sup> Riaz Ahmad, *The Concept of the Islamic State as found in the writings of Abu Ala Maududi* (Ph.D. Thesis University of Durham, 1969), 39–40.

<sup>136</sup> The journals belonged to the 'Ulamā' organization of the Indian sub-continent and aimed to share their ideas on Islamic issues with Muslims from other countries.

<sup>137</sup> Adams, "Maududi and the Islamic State," 100.



and repetitions of the old slander that Islam promises Paradise to those who kill an unbeliever.<sup>138</sup>

Al-Mawdūdī answered these accusations in the columns of *al-Jāmiʿa*. He also produced a series of articles on Islam's view on war, which were published as a book entitled *al-Jihād fi'l-Islām* in 1930.<sup>139</sup>

From this time on, al-Mawdūdī seems to have devoted himself to a deeper study of Islamic theology. He produced later another book on theology entitled *Towards Understanding Islam*.<sup>140</sup> This book was received with great acclaim from Muslims outside the Indian sub-continent when it was translated into Arabic and circulated along with other works by al-Mawdūdī's. In this regard, the al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn of Egypt played an important role in its translation and circulation for the use of fellow Muslims.<sup>141</sup>

Al-Mawdūdī's decision to write seriously on Islamic issues was also motivated by his feeling of responsibility to expose the nature of *jāhiliyya* surrounding Muslim society at that time and all the evil that it contained as the result of Western influences. In his opinion, Islam was a strong weapon against this danger. Therefore he found that it was necessary to give a clear explanation to his fellow Muslims of the basics of Islamic theology such as *aqīda* and *īmān* (faith).<sup>142</sup> At this stage his efforts were aimed primarily at the political community or the ruling elite, not at the person in the street. This was due to his belief that practical social change was impossible unless the theoretical views held by the leadership were changed first.<sup>143</sup> Thus, al-Mawdūdī's teaching was to correct the erroneous ways of thinking

<sup>138</sup> Adams, "Maududi and the Islamic State," 100–101.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 101. See also Ahmad, *The Concept of the Islamic State*, 42.

<sup>140</sup> The book was originally written in Urdu entitled *Risāla al-Dīniyya* (A Book of Theology). It was then translated into English in 1932. See Ahmad, *The Concept of the Islamic State*, 43.

<sup>141</sup> L. Binder, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan* (Berkeley, University of California, 1965), 82.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 102.

among the Muslim upper classes who had been much seduced by *jāhiliyya*. In his book *Towards Understanding Islam*, for instance, al-Mawdūdī emphasized the significance of faith in God to keep Muslims away from *jāhiliyya* elements:

It is the knowledge of the attributes of God, which enables man to cultivate in him the noblest of human qualities and to fashion his life in virtue and godliness. If a man does not know that there is One and only One God who is the Creator, the Ruler, and the Sustainer of the Universe..he may fall a prey to false gods, and offer his homage to them to solicit their favour. But if he knows the divine attribute of *tawḥīd* (oneness of God), there is not the least possibility of his falling a prey to this illusion.<sup>144</sup>

The question of the future of the Muslim minority in the Indian sub-continent after independence was another important factor which led al-Mawdūdī to change his direction of thought to Muslim welfare. He became aware of a great danger awaiting the Muslim community, owing to a clear stance from the Indian National Congress, under Ghandi's leadership, which declared that all Indians would soon constitute a single nation, regardless of their race, culture and religion, and that the future government of India would be both democratic and secular.<sup>145</sup> At this point, al-Mawdūdī saw a gradual attempt by the Congress to destroy the Muslims' identity and their sense of nationality. The adoption of a secular government would, in his view, discriminate against the minority religious groups, especially Muslims, and the government itself would favour the Hinduism that was the religion of the majority.<sup>146</sup>

With the aim of protecting Muslim interests, al-Mawdūdī, along with his close friends, founded the Jamā'at al-Islāmi in August 1941. He was elected as the first leader and served the Jamā'at until 1972. This movement was supported by Muslim activists and notable 'ulamā' of Sub-Indian continent such as Sayyid Abū'l-

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<sup>144</sup> Abū'l-A'ālā al-Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding Islam* (London: U.K. Islamic Mission, 1980), 22.

<sup>145</sup> Adams, "Mawdudi and the Islamic State," 102.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

Hasan ʿAlī al-Nadwī and Muḥammad Manzūr Nuʿmānī.<sup>147</sup> Al-Mawdūdī and his Jamāʿat al-Islāmi were also given moral support by the Ikhwān of Egypt. This can be seen from the foundation and organization of the Jamāʿat al-Islāmi, which had some similarities with the Ikhwān, established earlier in 1928. In addition, many of al-Bannā's lectures on politics and the aims of the establishment of the Ikhwān had been translated into Urdu by the Jamāʿat al-Islāmi and had continued to be distributed by them in the form of small tracts.<sup>148</sup> Thus the period from the late 1930s to the early 1940s saw al-Mawdūdī producing articles and essays aimed at propagating his ideas on Islamic issues and political matters. Besides *al-Jihād fī'l-Islām* and *Towards Understanding Islam*, al-Mawdūdī wrote *Tarjuman al-Qur'ān*<sup>149</sup> and *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*.<sup>150</sup> Those works were regarded as very important by many Muslim scholars inside and outside India. They have since been translated into other languages such as English and Arabic and circulated, with other works of al-Mawdūdī.

When examining al-Mawdūdī's works, one finds that terms like *jihād*, *ḥākimiyya* and *jāhiliyya* were widely used by the author in line with the contemporary issues of the twentieth-century Islamic resurgence. It is possible that al-Mawdūdī's ideas and his theory of Islamic revivalism as the whole were enhanced by the painful experience of colonialism, similar to that which had been experienced by other Muslim countries. Thus it was not surprising that his works were warmly received by a large number of Muslim men of letters, particularly in Egypt where he

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<sup>147</sup> Tripp, "Sayyid Quṭb: The Political Vision," 111.

<sup>148</sup> Ahmad, *The Concept of the Islamic State*, 46.

<sup>149</sup> It was a journal written in 1932 during al-Mawdūdī's stay in Hyderabad. See Adam, "Mawdudi and the Islamic State," 101.

<sup>150</sup> This was al-Mawdūdī's first Qur'anic translation, began in 1942 and completed in 1972. See Tripp, "Sayyid Quṭb: The Political Vision," 104.

was regarded as one of the foremost exponents and interpreters of Islam in modern times.<sup>151</sup>

Quṭb's interest in al-Mawdūdī's Islamic thought can be traced to the early 1950s, when many of the latter's scholarly works were translated into languages of both the Islamic and the Western worlds. Moreover, being a new member of the Ikhwān enabled Quṭb to gain access to al-Mawdūdī's works, since the Ikhwān, as we noted earlier, had played an important part in translating and circulating the latter's ideas.

Among al-Mawdūdī's major works which had been translated from Urdu and English into Arabic were *Jihād in Islam*, *Islam and Jāhiliyya* and *The Principle of Islamic Government*. In 1951, al-Nadwī, a disciple and close friend of al-Mawdūdī, published a book in Arabic entitled *What Did the World Lose Due to the Decline of Islam?* The book expounded clearly al-Mawdūdī's thought and his views on modern *jāhiliyya* doctrine. Quṭb's exposure to al-Mawdūdī's ideas and his Islamic activism was also increased by al-Nadwī's visit to him in the same year. It was a great moment for Quṭb for he found that many of al-Mawdūdī's ideas were in parallel with the objectives for which he was struggling. As Sivan writes, "the visit had a strong impact on Quṭb political thought when both "found their ideas to be in close affinity."<sup>152</sup>

Many of Quṭb's works written in the 1950s quoted al-Mawdūdī's Islamic ideas and terms such as *jāhiliyya*,<sup>153</sup> *manhaj* and *jihād*. Quṭb's discussion of the sovereignty of God in *Mustaqbal li hādhā al-dīn* (Islam: The Religion of the Future), for instance, referred to al-Mawdūdī's work, *The Four Terminologies in the*

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<sup>151</sup> Adams, "Maududi and the Islamic State," 99.

<sup>152</sup> Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 23.

<sup>153</sup> *Jāhiliyya* literally means the time of ignorance. Historically it denotes pre-Islamic poetry and culture. In Quṭb's writings, *Jāhiliyya* refers to any human anywhere and society at any time and place that which does not base its laws or principles of life on the *sharī'a* of God.



*Qur'an*.<sup>154</sup> Quṭb's other work which quoted al-Mawdūdī's ideas at length was *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*. In this Qur'anic commentary the concepts of *jāhiliyya* and *ḥākimiyya* were widely used by Quṭb in his analysis of contemporary society. In his view, Egyptian society lived in a new *jāhiliyya* – the *jāhiliyya* of Arab nationalism as represented by the Nasserite regime. Its laws, morals and behaviour were based on *jāhilī* concepts and were not compatible with Islam. Quṭb went further and declared that *jāhiliyya* was facing not only the Egyptians but also the whole Muslim *umma* where their ways of life were built on the laws laid down by their own fellow men.<sup>155</sup>

Quṭb's concept of *jāhiliyya* and its usage seemed to depart a little from that of al-Mawdūdī's concept of *jāhiliyya*. Perhaps the different environments of these two figures was the main reason for their different understanding and application of the concept. As we noted earlier, al-Mawdūdī's definition of *jāhiliyya* mainly referred to the way of life and thought of the ruling classes, those leaders of Muslim India, and not the person in the street. Furthermore, in al-Mawdūdī's view, there were two categories of *jāhiliyya*: pure *jāhiliyya* and mixed *jāhiliyya*. Pure *jāhiliyya* rejected God completely, whereas mixed *jāhiliyya* referred to those who associated religion with infidelity and did not rule by God's order. Quṭb, on the other hand, claimed that the whole world was living a *jāhilī* society, which was pure *jāhiliyya*.<sup>156</sup>

Though Quṭb differed slightly from al-Mawdūdī in defining certain terms, the influence of al-Mawdūdī and the Jamāat al-Islāmi upon Quṭb's Islamic thought of the 1950s was paramount. Both had the same aim in their struggle, that is, the return to Islam as the way of life: socially, politically and economically.

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<sup>154</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Islam the Religion of the Future* (Kuwait: IIFSO, 1992), 11–12.

<sup>155</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1992), 2:891.

<sup>156</sup> Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, 20.

## 1.4 Conclusion

The formative phases of Quṭb's life saw the development of his intellectual career and emergence as one of the important Muslim figures of the twentieth century. Throughout those years Quṭb's background, including his upbringing, education and the socio-political conditions of Egyptian society, were responsible for shaping his cultural and intellectual orientation. In addition, the intellectual environment during his years in Cairo was also exceptional, for Quṭb appears to have been gradually influenced by names like al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Aqqād and al-Bannā, who contributed to shaping Quṭb's critical basis of thought and his outlook on the social and political situation of his country. More importantly, the personality of al-Bannā and his struggle under the banner of the Ikhwān, which was attempting to present Islam as a comprehensive way of life to the Egyptians, had convinced Quṭb of the importance of taking part in Islamic activities to deal with the current problems facing his society.

Quṭb's joining the Ikhwan in 1951 was a meaningful moment in his Islamic activism for it enabled him to play a direct role in the political struggle in the country by an organized Islamic group. In addition, his association with the Ikhwān enabled Quṭb to read al-Mawdūdī's works, which had a strong influence upon his thought and crystallized his understanding of Islam. Quṭb's role in the Ikhwān's struggle also proved his sincerity in his calling people to Islam when he began by himself to reform his society, even though this eventually cost him his life.

## Chapter Two

### Socio-religious commitment: Quṭb's thought between 1947 and 1952

#### 2.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the earlier discussion on Quṭb's formative phase, this period witnessed his shift from the realms of literature and poetry to the analysis of social and political problems from the Islamic viewpoint. In fact, this new orientation of his thought was seen as a response to the actual Egyptian socio-political conditions during World War II and the post-war period, which led Egypt into a period of increasing violence, chaos and anarchy. According to Musallam, there was a breakdown of law and order between 1945 and 1952, in which strikes broke out everywhere, including among industrial workers, public employees and the police force.<sup>157</sup> This indicated clearly the disillusionment of the Egyptians with the government in power, which had failed to solve the country's pressing problems. They began to demand a social reform that would guarantee social justice put into practice.

At the intellectual level, leading modernists such as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal and several others focused their writings on social reforms for the betterment of the people of Egypt. Other members of the Western-educated elite, like the economist Rashīd al-Barawī and the philosopher ʿAbd al-Rahmān Badawī, also shared the view of the need for such reforms, in particular, economic reform to bring justice to Egyptian society.<sup>158</sup> Thus, this new phenomenon within Egyptian intellectual circles gave Quṭb strong moral support and, more importantly, confirmed his stand on the hotly debated issues.

Only in 1947, after his literary studies of the Qur'ān, did Quṭb's interest in religion merge with his awareness of the prevailing social and political conditions.

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<sup>157</sup> Adnan Musallam, "Sayyid Quṭb and Social Justice 1945–1948," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 4:1 (1993): 52–53.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 54–55.

This new phase of his thought was manifested clearly in articles that appeared in that year in journals such as *al-‘Ālam al-‘Arabī* (The Arab World) and *al-Fikr al-Jadīd* (New Thought).

Before discussing further Quṭb’s socio-religious commitment from 1947 to 1952, it is important to look first at the period of his Qur’anic analysis, from which his commitment to the Islamic way of life began to evolve. Though Quṭb’s analysis focused mainly on the literary aspects of the Qur’ān, there were some clear hints of the attitude that he later assumed towards Islam.

## 2.2 Literary analysis of the Qur’ān

Quṭb’s renewed interest in the Qur’ān was, perhaps, manifest with the publication in 1939 of his earliest article entitled “*al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī’l-Qur’ān*” in *Muqataṭaf* magazine. In the introduction he stated: “The time has come to study the Qur’ān as a literary book and to examine it from a completely artistic point of view.”<sup>159</sup> Throughout the discussion, Quṭb put more emphasis on the literary aspect of the Qur’ān without any elaboration on the nature of the Book itself or any other social and political issues. Thus, his aim was to show the elements of beauty in its style so that writers might be influenced by it as Western writers were influenced by the Bible.<sup>160</sup>

According to Khālidī, the seeds of Quṭb’s interest in the Qur’ān can be dated from his childhood. At that stage Quṭb’s mother, Fāṭima, played an important role in implanting such an interest in him by making him listen carefully to Qur’anic recitations, especially during the month of Ramaḍān when a reciter of the Qur’ān was invited to their house. It was however during Quṭb’s years at the Dār al-‘Ulūm in the 1920s that his particular interest in the literary analysis of the Qur’ān developed.

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<sup>159</sup> Samira Fayyad, *The Study of Quṭb’s thought and his literature* (unpublished Ph.D thesis University of Manchester, 1976), 34. See also Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālidī, *Madkhal ilā Zilāl al-Qur’ān* (Jedda: Dār al-Manāra, 1986), 36.

<sup>160</sup> Fayyad, *The Study of Quṭb’s thought*, 34.



This was due to his dissatisfaction with the institution's method of teaching the Qur'anic exegesis, which, according to him, was devoid of the enjoyment and excitement that he had experienced in his childhood.<sup>161</sup> Therefore, the question arose in his mind: "Are there two Qur'āns: that of childhood, sweet, easy and exciting, and that of youth, difficult, complicated and dissected? Or is it rather the fault of the methods of interpretation?"<sup>162</sup>

With this new idea in mind, Quṭb then undertook to study the Qur'ān. It was, however, not for the purpose of increasing his knowledge of religious matters but to examine the Qur'ān's artistic imagery. Quṭb clearly stated this renewed interest:

I have returned to the Qur'ān by reading it, but not in the books of exegesis. And I have rediscovered my beloved and beautiful Qur'ān, and found [again] my sweet and longing images – images without the original naivety [I attached to them]. I came now to comprehend its purposes and goals.<sup>163</sup>

Quṭb's interest in the Qur'ān did not end with the publication of his article in *al-Muqtaṭaf*. In 1945, his second Qur'anic work, *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī'l-Qur'ān* was published. The book was an extension of his previous article, with some additions and modifications in line with the author's personal experience in examining the Qur'anic text itself. At this stage, he aimed to rediscover the artistic beauty of the Qur'ān as it was felt by the first generation of Muslims, and thus, restore it to the hearts of Muslims in a way similar to that in which the Arabs first received it and were attracted by it.<sup>164</sup>

Also in *Taṣwīr* Quṭb discovered that the power of the Qur'ān did not lie in a single sentence or expression, but in the whole style and method of conveying its religious message. Quṭb cited many examples of the Qur'ān's artistic imagery at its

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<sup>161</sup> Khālidī, *Madhkhal ilā Zilāl*, 35.

<sup>162</sup> Quṭb, *Taṣwīr*, 8.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>164</sup> Musallam, *Formative Stage*, 137–138.

method of personification. This includes verse 18 of *Sūra* 81 (*al-Takwīr*), “*wa 'l-ṣubḥ idhā tanaffas*” (By the morning when it breathes), which, according to him, was an expression of the peaceful quiet life coming from the morning’s breath filling all creatures with activity.<sup>165</sup> Also in verse 40 of *Sūra* 7 (*al-Aʿrāf*):

Verily, those who believe Our revelations and treat them with arrogance, for them the gates of Heaven will not be opened, and they will not enter Paradise until the camel goes through the eye of the needle. Thus do We recompense the sinners.

The abstract meaning of the *Sūra*, according to Quṭb, gave a sensual image in which the impossibility of the unbelievers entering Heaven was portrayed and likened to the impossibility of a camel entering a needle’s eye.<sup>166</sup>

More interesting was his argument that the Qur’ān, despite its beautiful expression, was successful in propagating its message and influencing the Arabs, among them the two great leaders of the Quraysh, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and al-Walīd bin al-Mughīra. Both accepted Islam only after marvelling at the charm of the Qur’ān, which awakened them to its beauty and inimitability (*ʿiʿjāz*).<sup>167</sup> Indeed, these events which happened to the great Companions of the Prophet strongly influenced Quṭb as did his experiences from his own Qur’anic studies.

Following the completion of *Taṣwīr*, Quṭb started writing his second book, *Mashāhid al-Qiyāma fī'l-Qur'ān*, in 1947. He discussed at length the Day of Resurrection mentioned in the Qur’ān. Here again, he clarified that his goal was to address Qur’anic expressions from a literary point of view and express his wonder at the Qur’ān’s literary style and inimitability as experienced by the Arabs in the early days of Islam.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, questions of history or politics in the Qur’ān were not

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<sup>165</sup> Quṭb, *Taṣwīr*, 36.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>168</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Mashāhid al-Qiyāma fī'l-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993), 9.

part of his interest. His discussion began by surveying the development of the doctrine of the afterlife (*al-<sup>c</sup>ālam al-ākhar*) as it appeared in the writings of the ancients Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. He further elaborated this idea with examples from ancient religious beliefs such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity.<sup>169</sup>

Turning to the Qur'anic outlook on the afterlife, Quṭb contended that the Qur'ān portrayed the doomsday scenes in a dynamic way and thus greatly affected the human mind. According to him, the artistic portrayal by the Qur'ān of the afterlife was indirectly successful in convincing the Arabs to believe in heaven and hell.<sup>170</sup> At this point, Quṭb started to consider the ability of the Qur'ān to captivate the Arabs, who were renowned for their deep sensitivities and breadth of imagination. He then found that it was the charm of the Qur'anic literature that influenced them to believe in the Book and become Muslims.<sup>171</sup> So, there emerged a new aim in Quṭb's mind: to study the charm of the Qur'ān in its role of propagating a religious message.<sup>172</sup> Musallam noted this new interest of Quṭb's, saying that despite Quṭb's goal to focus on the artistic expression found in the Qur'anic verses, "the Qur'ān gradually led him to take a deeper interest in its religious message, which eventually influenced him and guided him to faith."<sup>173</sup>

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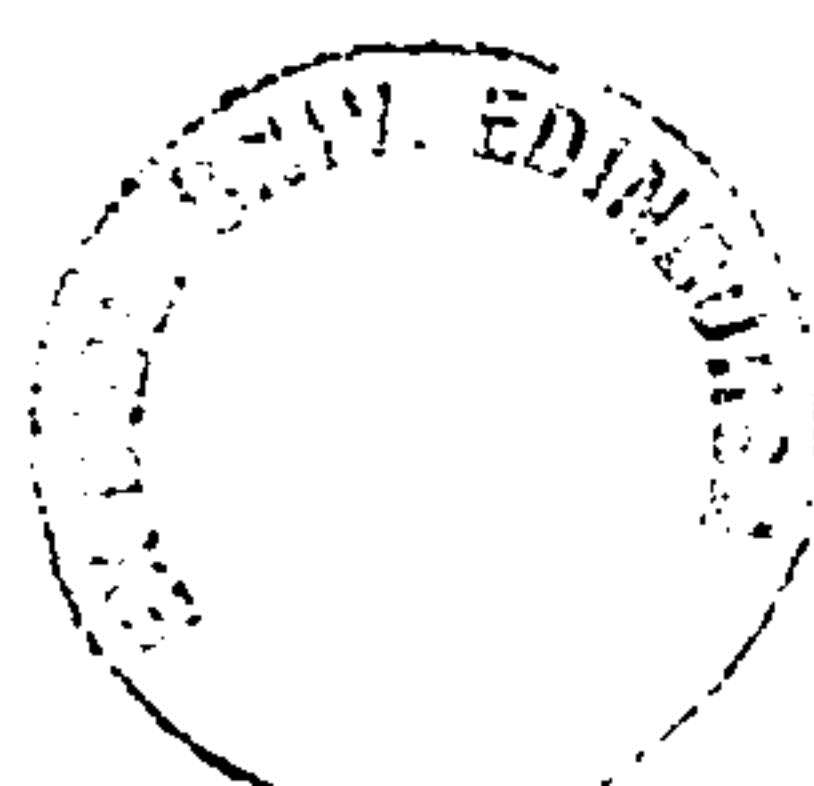
<sup>169</sup> Quṭb, *Mashāhid*, 13–41.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>171</sup> Quṭb also mentioned in *Mashāhid* that although there were some Jews and Christians [who were informed about the afterlife from their Torah and Bible] living in the Arabian peninsular prior to the coming of Islam, questions relating to the afterlife were still strange matters to the Arabs. This could be seen at the beginning of Prophet Muḥammad's *da'wa* (mission) when he faced strong opposition from the Arabs who heard his message about the afterlife. See Quṭb, *Mashāhid*, 41. On the nature of debate between the Prophet and the Arabs on the afterlife, see the Qur'anic description in verses 7–8 of *Sūra* 34 (*Sabā'*), which says: "Those who disbelieve say: "Shall we direct you to a man (Muḥammad) who will tell you (that) when you have become fully disintegrated into dust with full dispersion, then you will be created anew?" Has he (Muḥammad) invented a lie against Allah, or is there a madness in him? Nay, but those who disbelieve in the Hereafter are (themselves) in a torment, and in great error."

<sup>172</sup> Quṭb, *Mashāhid*, 9.

<sup>173</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 146.





More significant is that Quṭb's new interest in the Qur'ān's artistic inimitability finally enabled him to understand the Book as a belief system and a guide for human life in all its aspects: social, economic and political. This can be seen with the appearance of his first Islamic book, *al-°Adāla al-Ijtimā°iyya fī'l-Islām*, two years later in 1949. The book contained more than two hundred verses from the Qur'ān to support his Islamic discussion covering all kinds of topics from doctrinal belief to social and economic questions.

Here it seems that Quṭb's eight years of devotion to the literary study of the Qur'ān had prepared him with a new intellectual outlook: his interest in Islam as a way of life. Besides *al-°Adāla*, the appearance of Quṭb's other works such as *al-Salām al-°Ālamī* and *Ma°rakat* were also a clear indication of his development of thought as he began to put much emphasis on God as the Supreme Power and discuss extensively the concept of balance and integration of the universe, life and humankind. When describing Quṭb's new Islamic orientation and his Qur'anic justification in solving the current socio-political problems of his society, Abu Rabi° stated: "Quṭb's utilization of the Qur'anic text as aesthetics paves the way for a more general and perhaps imaginative use of the text as an ideological document in the 1950 and 1960s."<sup>174</sup>

### 2.3 The Islamic Answer

From the previous pages, one is given the impression that the Qur'ān was the single factor that led to Quṭb's change of direction from literary works to the study of Islam as a way of life. Nevertheless, it is important to note here that the social and political situation in Egypt during the 1940s, especially after World War II, had also contributed towards his religious realism. These years, as mentioned in the earlier discussion, witnessed his disillusionment with the prevailing political system of the country. The climax of his career during this stage was his divorce from the Wafd

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<sup>174</sup> Abu Rabi°, *Intellectual Origins*, 106.



party and his pursuit of an independent literary path. Many of his articles had demanded social and political reforms in the country. In 1945, for example, he wrote an article in *al-Risāla* magazine, in which he criticized the leaders of the existing political parties, whom he considered more inclined to demagoguery than to democracy in their programmes. Quṭb also called them to focus more on social programmes, to correct the unequal distribution of wealth and promote social justice to benefit all Egyptians.<sup>175</sup>

Although Quṭb's articles written in 1945 advocated social, economic and political reform, none advocated "Islamic" solutions. Only in October 1947, after his long study of the Qur'ān coupled with a consciousness of the national crisis, did he establish, with some friends, a weekly journal, *al-Fikr al-Jadīd* (New Thought). The journal offered Islamic solutions to the social problems facing the country. In addition, it attempted to bring people's attention to Islam instead of following capitalist and communist groups, who were active in spreading their reformative programmes for the Egyptians. Quṭb wrote in the journal that the time had come to look to Islam to solve the current problems in a practical and realistic manner, in true harmony with both an Islamic spirit and the contemporary human situation.<sup>176</sup> The journal, however, did not describe in detail the Islamic method of achieving alising justice in human social and economic welfare, such as the obligation to pay *zakāt* etc. Rather, it focused more on a just distribution of wealth in Egypt, relations between landowners and workers, and between employers and employees in regard to wages and working hours.<sup>177</sup> This lack of any comprehensive Islamic solution was perhaps due to the short period of its appearance: it was published for only six months

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<sup>175</sup> See Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-Milād*, 266. See also Musallam, "Sayyid Quṭb and Social Justice," 58.

<sup>176</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 189. See also, Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-Milād*, 105–107.

<sup>177</sup> Musallam, *The Formative Stages*, 190.

(October 1947 to May 1948) before being closed down owing to martial law being declared prior to the Palestine war.

Despite its short life, the journal successfully achieved its goals. The reform programmes advocated by the journal opened the minds of the Egyptians to the need to stand up to the privileged elite in their society and demand social justice the distribution of wealth, individual ownership and so on. As Heyworth-Dunne writes:

The journal promised to be one of the most interesting experiments of modern times, as it offered some real contributions by suggesting methods which could be employed for the solution of some of the acute social problems facing the Egyptian today. The editors also made it their duty to show up the real situation amongst the poor, both in the towns and in the country. He (Quṭb) and his agents collected a number of detailed reports on the living conditions of their compatriots and published these with photographs.<sup>178</sup>

## 2.4 The call for an Islamic social system

Quṭb's reform programmes did not end with the demise of *al-Fikr al-Jadīd* in 1948. On the contrary, he continued his activities by calling the people to return to Islam for a solution to their current social and political problems. The appearance of his later books such as *al-ʿAdāla al-Ijtimāʿiyya fī'l-Islām* (1949), *Maʿrakat al-Islām wa'l-Ra'smāliyya* (1951) and *al-Salām al-ʿĀlami wa'l-Islām* (1951) are a clear indication of this new phase in Quṭb's intellectual career.

Apart from Quṭb's general Islamic solutions to the problems of the country, the books exposed to the Egyptians the real enemies who had contributed to its social, economic and cultural deterioration. They included the imperialists such as the British and the French governments, whom Quṭb regarded as playing a crucial role in Egyptian politics. British interference in this sphere could be seen, for instance, in the appointment of Muṣṭafā Nāḥās as the Prime Minister in 1942.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> J. Heyworth Dunne, *Religion and Political Trends in Modern Egypt* (Washington D.C., 1950), 97.

<sup>179</sup> Khālidī, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-Mīlād*, 266.

The British Ambassador, with British tanks and troops surrounding the palace, forced King Farouq to form a new government under Muṣṭafā Naḥḥās. This led to frustration among Wafdists, who realized that such an appointment and formation of the government were based on British interests. As Vatikiotis writes:

Naḥḥās had come to power only because Britain had threatened the monarch with the use of armed force. Britain on her part had simply considered that at that critical moment of her wartime position a Wafdist government in Egypt was the most consonant with, and convenient to, her interest. There was no indication that the British government considered the Wafd the best hope of a government as such for Egypt.<sup>180</sup>

Following this event, Quṭb, like some of the other Wafdists, distanced himself from the party and took an independent path. He clearly stated in *al-Risāla* the reasons for his departure from Wafd, among which was his view that the new government and those associating with Naḥḥās were people with no concern for the Egyptian nation.

There arise feelings (among them) that Britain is a country that cannot be defeated and the poverty (facing the Egyptian masses) is an endemic disease...They are no longer thinking about reformative programmes for leading the new generation (to a better life).<sup>181</sup>

#### 2.4.1 *Al-ʿAdāla al-Ijtimāʿiyya fī'l-Islām* (Social justice in Islam)

Quṭb's call for an Islamic social system was clearly manifest in his first book on an Islamic topic, *al-ʿAdāla al-Ijtimāʿiyya fī'l-Islām*, published in 1949. The book dealt extensively with the social, economic, cultural and educational conditions and policies of Egypt, especially during World War II and the post-war period.

*Al-ʿAdāla* was a reflection of both the current social and political problems facing Egyptian society and Quṭb's personal experience of living in such conditions. Despite the many views and ideas expressed by contemporary scholars and writers, especially communist ideology, to cure the social ills, Quṭb chose a different path,

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<sup>180</sup> Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt*, 350–351.

<sup>181</sup> See Khālīdī, *Sayyid Quṭb: min al-Milād*, 267.



taking from the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* of the Prophet practical examples to deal with the current situation in Egypt. In this regard, Quṭb's earlier interest in the Qur'ān, as manifested in his various articles and books between 1939 and 1947, was very much apparent in *al-ʿAdāla*. The verses of the Qur'ān were used by Quṭb to support his ideas, thus making the Qur'ān his major source.<sup>182</sup>

The book could be divided into four main sections: the first was the general Islamic theory of justice, including an examination of the Islamic theory of the universe, life and humankind. The second discussed the nature of Islamic social justice and its foundations; the third comprised examples from the history of Islam, showing how Islamic justice worked in practice; and the final section took a glimpse at the present and future of Islam.

In the opening remarks of *al-ʿAdāla*, Quṭb called all Muslims, and the Egyptians in particular, to return to what he viewed as the stored-up resources of Islam to seek the solution to their current social problems and to reject foreign ideologies derived from Western capitalism and communism. These foreign ideologies, Quṭb contended, could not solve the problems of the Muslims since their principles were in contradiction to the Islamic principles of life, which combined the material and spiritual aspects of life based on Qur'anic teachings. Western capitalism and the communism, on the other hand, had divorced religion from the worldly affairs of individuals' lives. As a result, religion remained in ideal isolation, with no jurisdiction over life, no connection with its affairs, and no remedy for its social, political and economic problems.<sup>183</sup>

Turning to the Islamic concept of justice in general and social justice in particular, Quṭb held the opinion that one must first examine the Islamic theory of universe, life and humankind to gain a clear understanding of the nature of social

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<sup>182</sup> Musallam, "Sayyid Quṭb and Social Justice," 59.

<sup>183</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla al-Ijtīmāʿiyya fī l-Islām* (Cairo: Matbaʿa Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1952), 10–20.



justice in Islam. “For social justice is only a branch of that great science to which all Islamic studies must refer.”<sup>184</sup> Therefore, humans, as part of God’s creation, whose lives constituted part of the lives of other creations in this universe, must co-operate with their fellow humans in their communities in the same way that they co-operated with other creatures of God. Quṭb’s point here was that a clear understanding of the Islamic theory of the universe, which views humankind as a harmonious unity and part of the larger harmony of the whole universe, would enable people to see clearly their role in life. “When we perceive this comprehensiveness in the nature of the Islamic view of the universe, life and humankind, we perceive also the basic outlines of social justice in Islam.”<sup>185</sup>

According to Quṭb, Islam was a religion of justice and unity. It united all humankind irrespective of difference in colour, race and class, into one faith in God. This means that solidarity, love, co-operation, and mutual understanding among human beings on the basis of faith in God was what Islam sought to achieve through its teachings.<sup>186</sup> Islamic justice in human social affairs also meant justice and equality in rights and punishment. Therefore, the individual, the group, the party, the nation are governed by one law with one goal, that the activity of the individual and the activity of the group may proceed freely and all can work together without conflict, directing their lives to God, the Creator of life. There is no favouring of one party at the expense of another, no favouring of the individual at the expense of the community, for each has rights and each has duties in accordance with the nature of justice and equality prescribed in Islam.<sup>187</sup>

At this point, it can be said that social justice in Islam is not merely limited to economics but includes all aspects of human life, based on faith in God. This is, of

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<sup>184</sup> Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla*, 21.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–27.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–28.

course, in accordance with the nature of Islam as “a religion of unity between worship and social relations, belief (*‘aqīda*) and behaviour (*sulūk*), spiritual and material things, economic and spiritual values, this world and the afterlife, and earth and heaven.”<sup>188</sup>

It seems here that Quṭb’s early experience of searching for spiritual fulfilment and the meaning of life greatly influenced the content of *al-‘Adāla*. It compelled him to see that the question of the universe, life and humankind was vital, since it required human beings to have a clear vision about their lives and the purpose of their existence in this world. His strong emphasis on this question in *al-‘Adāla* and other books that appeared in the following years was evidence of his new commitment to an Islamic way of life. Quṭb, however, did not give a detailed explanation of what he meant behind his calling Muslims to examining the above Islamic theory (the universe, life and humankind). Did he mean to call his fellow Muslims to observe the concept of God that includes an understanding of God’s attributes such *ulūhiyya*, *rubūbiyya* and *ḥākimiyya* and their relation to the realization of social justice? This remained unanswered by Quṭb throughout *al-‘Adāla* discussion. Perhaps his priority at this stage was to call people to return to their Islamic roots instead of following capitalism and communism. Since *al-‘Adāla* was Quṭb’s first Islamic book, its content was possibly a reflection of the author’s state of mind, for he was still seeking a deeper understanding of Islam itself, especially its relationship with doctrine.

In a chapter on the foundations of social justice, Quṭb outlined three general principles that became the basis for its successful application: freedom of conscience, human equality and social solidarity. He argued that the means of realizing social

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<sup>188</sup> Quṭb, *al-‘Adāla*, 28.

justice and maintaining its basis in society rested upon the implementation of *sharīʿa* law<sup>189</sup> and its spiritual guidance in the human conscience. As he stated:

The basic principles are co-operation, mutual understanding and harmony within the bounds of the program of God and His laws. If someone deviates from these principles, he must be brought back to them by any means, because it is more appropriate to follow the rule of God in the universe than to follow the individuals and group's desires.<sup>190</sup>

In the section on the governmental system of Islam, Quṭb argued that its uniqueness was based on the fact that it was neither derived from other political systems known to the world today nor did it depend on them. Thus, if it had similarities found with other systems, this, according to him, was more likely to be coincidental, since Islam had chosen its own characteristic path and concentrated its attention on all the problems of human nature. Quṭb criticized some Muslim writers who referred only to the similarities of the Islamic political system with those of other political systems. Quṭb also criticized writers such as Dr. Haikal, who, instead of accepting the uniqueness and independence of the Islamic political system, still regarded the Islamic world as the Islamic empire. According to Quṭb, the discussion of Islam and its government covered not only to the number of provinces that were united under the central capital. There were other principles with which Islam was very much concerned, such as the attitude of the capital towards the provinces and the relationship between the two.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> The term *sharīʿa* was used by Quṭb throughout his writings, especially when calling fellow Muslims to return to the path of God instead of following human-made law. Quṭb defined *sharīʿa* in his work, *Maʿālim fi'l-Ṭarīq* as, "all that God laid down for the organization of the life of humankind. This is embodied in the principles of the belief, the principles of government, the principles of ethics, the principles of behavior, and the principle of knowledge...It is embodied in the legal injunctions...which are usually called *sharīʿa* in its narrow sense which does not give its real content in the Islamic concept." See Sayyid Quṭb, *Maʿālim fi'l-Ṭarīq* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1980), 124.

<sup>190</sup> Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla*, 24.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 91–94.

The principles of Islamic government, according to Quṭb, rested on justice on the part of the rulers, obedience on the part of the governed, and consultation (*shūrā*) between the ruler and the governed. Justice on the part of the ruler meant absolute impartiality in dealing with people under him, irrespective of their rank, colour, race, religious belief, or sex, so that all citizens could enjoy life in a just society.<sup>192</sup>

Obedience on the part of the governed was, however, conditional. It meant that the ruler was to be obeyed so long as he obeyed God and His messenger and manifested such obedience in practice. No obedience was due to a ruler who did not apply the *sharīʿa* law in governing the whole Muslim community, even though he (the ruler) asserted that he was a devout Muslim. This is because the ruler in Islam is not obeyed for his own sake, but only because he submits to the authority of God.<sup>193</sup>

Quṭb, however, did not discuss what should be done about a bad ruler who did not apply the *sharīʿa* laws but still held on to power by forcing other people to obey him. Did this mean that rebellion against such a ruler to replace him with someone else was necessary and permissible? Who should be responsible for removing such a bad ruler? Was it the task of all Muslims or certain *shūrā* members who had originally appointed him? These questions remain untouched by Quṭb. Perhaps the situation when *al-ʿAdāla* was first published did not necessitate Quṭb to go into further detail on the means to remove an unjust ruler in solving the current socio-political problems facing the country. It was also possible that his main aim in writing *al-ʿAdāla* was to show how Islam was far superior in solving social and economic problems compared with the materialistic systems of capitalism and communism. As Musallam writes:

Sayyid Quṭb's alienation from and anger at the established order for its failure to solve society's problems led him to write his *al-ʿAdāla al-Ijtīmāʿiyya fī'l-Islām* (Social Justice in Islam), in which he pressed for a

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<sup>192</sup> Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla*, 95.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 96–97.



solution to the dilemmas facing society that was based on an Islamic notion of social justice.<sup>194</sup>

In his treatment of economic policy in Islam, Quṭb wrote that it aimed to ensure the welfare of both individuals and the Muslim community. Here, he described in detail elaboration on the concept of individual ownership of property. This was permitted in Islam with some restrictions on how the owners increased and used their property. In this context Quṭb's point was that the individual acted for the property. Therefore, the property in the widest sense was a right which could belong only to the community, which in turn received it as a trust from Allah, who was the only true owner of everything.<sup>195</sup>

Quṭb was of the opinion that lawful work of any kind was the only permissible method of acquiring property. Therefore, usury, robbery, monopoly, theft and all other the crimes that underlie contemporary means of exploitation were prohibited. Quṭb saw that the obligation of *zakāt* was the best example to solve social problems and finally bring social justice to human society:

such assistance from the *zakāt* is the ultimate social benefit, and constitutes a guarantee for the man who is without resources...the needy must be helped in order to avoid destitution, in order to relieve him of the weight of necessity and the pressure of need, and then to set him free for a nobler form of life.<sup>196</sup>

It is important to note that Quṭb's notion of economics was more closely related to the management of property in Islam, which could lead to the practical realization of social justice. Thus any details of the Islamic economy and its significance would not be given in *al-ʿAdāla*, since the nature of the topic itself, with which the book dealt, did not permit any further explanation. Moreover as mentioned earlier, Quṭb's goal in writing *al-ʿAdāla* was to expose the real situation in Egyptian

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<sup>194</sup> Musallam, "Sayyid Quṭb and Social Justice," 55.

<sup>195</sup> Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla*, 107.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

society, which he viewed as a betrayal of Islamic principles. It is no surprise, therefore, to see that his notion of economics in *al-ʿAdāla* had received comments and criticism from some non-Muslim and Muslim writers.

W.C. Smith, for instance, disappointed at the lack of realistic construction of an economic system in *al-ʿAdāla*, criticized Quṭb for his limited discussion on usury (*ribā*), which dealt only with personal transactions between individuals and made no mention of industrial loans.<sup>197</sup> At this point, it is important to note that a detailed discussion of the Islamic economy would not have been appropriate in the context of *al-ʿAdāla* or the circumstances which led Quṭb to write the book. Quṭb admitted the lack of a comprehensive review of Islamic economics:

For social justice in Islam is a greater thing than mere economic theory, as we have already seen, and it seemed necessary first to discover the general teaching of Islam on social justice and discuss the nature, the foundations, and the methods of this justice in the broadest sense before turning to the matter of money itself.<sup>198</sup>

Mousalli's view is that the economic policy described by Quṭb is clearly socialist, for "he allows private enterprise but permits the state to control the economy when necessary or to dispossess its citizens when they are unreasonable."<sup>199</sup> In this context, Mousalli might be right to consider Quṭb a proponent of socialist ideology, but in the overall discussion of *al-ʿAdāla*, Quṭb insisted that only Islam could provide solutions to the current problems of the *Umma*. Neither Marxism nor Capitalism was suitable since they lacked the necessary spiritual guidance to bring social justice into being.

In the chapter entitled "The Historical Reality of Islam" Quṭb gave examples from early Islamic history to show how the spirit of Islam was applied in practice. In

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<sup>197</sup> Fayyad, *The Study of Quṭb's thought*, 61.

<sup>198</sup> Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla*, 102.

<sup>199</sup> Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, 199.

his opinion, it was during the lives of the Prophet, the four caliphs and ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz that justice was applied socially, economically and politically in line with Islam as both *ʿaqīda* and *sharīʿa*. Examples of justice on the part of the ruler (the Prophet and his Companions) were also given to show how their trained consciences compelled them to treat people fairly. Similarly, the people under their rule, gave their total obedience to those in authority for the sake of God.

In his treatment of the Umayyad caliphate, Quṭb saw that it marked the beginning of the disruption in the Islamic principles of government where the right to the caliphate, which before was based on the free choice of the Muslims and *shūrā*, was replaced by the monarchy. Quṭb explained at length why social justice had been distorted in Islamic history and criticized Muʿāwīyya's government policy for its monarchic basis. Despite this disruption, however, Quṭb was optimistic that the spirit of Islam would continue to exist in the conscience of individuals.

Quṭb ended the discussion by saying that Islam in its general principles of government and economic policy was always ready to meet the changing needs of all the societies that took it and its *sharīʿa* as their legal basis.<sup>200</sup> The Islamic spirit, according to Quṭb, had always been able to adapt to different circumstances. Therefore, the goal for each Muslim, he maintained, should be to preach the renewal of Islamic life, "a life governed by the spirit and the law of Islam which alone can produce the form of Islam which we need today."<sup>201</sup>

To conclude, *al-ʿAdāla* contains the theoretical principles and foundations of Quṭb's Islamic thought before he joined the Ikhwān in 1952. The significance of the book lies in the fact that it was the first Islamic work written by Quṭb to propose a third option to what seemed an inevitable choice between capitalism and communism. In his view, the justice offered by Islam in all aspects of human life was superior to that offered by capitalism and communism, because it combined spiritual

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<sup>200</sup> Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, 271.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

values and human social relations. The spiritual values, derived from a strong belief in God coupled with the enforcement of *sharīʿa* laws, were an effective means of realizing social justice in human society. It is not surprising, therefore, to see many Qurʾanic verses cited to support his search for the answer to the current situation in Egypt. In this context, Abu Rabiʿ is right when he considers *al-ʿAdāla* “a radical departure from Quṭb’s early work in literary, Qurʾanic and social criticism. More important at this stage is that Quṭb emerges as a social critic with a radical Islamic agenda.”<sup>202</sup>

#### 2.4.2 *Maʿrakat al-Islām waʾl-Raʾsmāʿiyya* (The Battle between Islam and Capitalism)

This work was written and published by Quṭb in February 1951, soon after his return to Egypt from the United States. As noted earlier, Quṭb was in the United States on an educational mission for two and a half years, from 1948 to 1951. His experience of living in this Western country enabled him to see at close quarters the enemy which he characterized as that of the secular, materialist, individualist and capitalist West. It was not surprising, therefore, that on his return, he adopted a deeper and more serious analysis of the whole notion of cultural colonialism rather than one of mere individual, moral exhortation. In this context *Maʿrakat* clearly refers to Quṭb’s attitude towards the Egyptian authorities and British imperialism, both of which he regarded as the real obstacles to attaining justice in human social affairs.<sup>203</sup>

As well as discussing the maldistribution of property and wealth, unequal opportunities, bureaucratic corruption and the consequent poor productivity, the book contains Quṭb’s attack against those oppressors and exploiters (*ṭughāt wa mustaghilīn*) and religious scholars (*shuyūkh*) who supported exploitation and

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<sup>202</sup> Abu Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins*, 120.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.



oppression in the name of religion.<sup>204</sup> In his view, these so-called professional men of religion not only associated themselves with the dictatorial authorities of Egypt, but, at the same time, accused the reform groups, and Islamic groups in particular, of being proponents of communism, which was a danger to public security.<sup>205</sup> Quṭb's point of departure was to purify Islam from those whom he considered the traitors of religion, since their idea of religion was more closely connected to their own survival and personal interest.

In the chapter entitled "The Herald's Cry" Quṭb attacked the parliamentary system of Egypt for serving the interests of foreign powers and neglecting the needs of the ordinary people. He saw that justice on the part of the rulers no longer existed in Egypt. Moreover, the association of religious scholars with the corrupt government only worsened the situation. He believed that exposing those who participated in corruption would at least open the mind of the people to their enemies, who had long exploited the wealth of the country in the name of religion, democracy and equality. These ideas had become masks which hid the real contradictions in Egypt. Quṭb clearly stated his aims in writing the work: "The deterioration in social conditions from which the people of Egypt suffer cannot continue indefinitely... This is a fact that should be known by all."<sup>206</sup>

At the end of the book Quṭb called on the people to end this intolerable state of affairs and put their trust in Islam to solve the current problems facing their country. Here he clarified the ambiguity that people perceive in Islamic rule:

Islam does not mean a retreat from civilization into the primitive rule of the desert Arabs. Neither does it mean that the *sharīʿa* will be limited to medieval rules, or that power will be in the hands of *shaykhs* and dervishes, or that the government will be despotic, or that textual sources of the religion will be obscure. If Islam rules, it will not, as many feared, confine

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<sup>204</sup> Quṭb, *Maʿrakat*, 100.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

the woman to the harem, nor will it be fanatical in its treatment of minorities.<sup>207</sup>

At this stage Quṭb's interest in Islam was genuine. His treatment of the socio-political issues from an Islamic point of view was clear. It should also be noted that, despite his awareness of the appeal of communism in the country, Quṭb was more concerned about the direct threat of capitalism and imperialism which had spread not only in Egypt but also throughout the Muslim world.

#### 2.4.3 *Al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī wa'l-Islām* (Islam and Universal Peace)

A few months after *Maʿrakat*, Quṭb completed another Islamic work, focusing on Islam's posture towards world peace. Indeed, the publication of this book, in October 1951, was a manifestation of the prevailing social and political phenomenon not only in Egypt but also throughout the world. Here, Quṭb's aim was to analyse in detail the turmoil of international politics in the light of what he perceived to be "genuine Islam."

As humanity at present is deeply concerned about the problem of world peace, one should ask whether Islam has a constructive opinion in this matter, and what are the solutions it provides. This book is meant to answer this question in detail.<sup>208</sup>

In his introduction, Quṭb stated that *ʿaqīda* was essential in providing the ways and means to overcome problems in human life. Therefore, any discussion of the solution of social, economic and political problems facing the *umma* today must be based on *ʿaqīda*, since this religious belief enabled man to communicate with God, the Creator of humans, their lives and the whole universe. As Quṭb stated:

The function of *ʿaqīda* and its effect on man's soul is that it expands the powers of the believer's soul, thus enlarging his mental and physical faculties. This power explains the miracles that radically change daily life. It

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<sup>207</sup> Quṭb, *Maʿrakat*, 170.

<sup>208</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Islam and Universal Peace* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1993), 4.

explains miracles that urge the individual to sacrifice his mortal life and gain eternal life, for the believer can stand against the influence of states, governments, wealth, and arms. Their forces will be defeated by the force of the belief of the faithful who derive their strength from the inexhaustible eternal source of power... Only *‘aqīda* enables man to communicate with the all-powerful God and that belief endows the feeble individual with such strength and support that even the forces of wealth and oppression are unable to shake him.<sup>209</sup>

Quṭb’s emphasis on *‘aqīda* derived from his belief that only under one creed, could Muslims from all parts of the world be reunited and their social and political relations strengthened. More importantly, *‘aqīda* could protect them from internal and external challenges:

In our country, as in all Muslim countries, we face different kinds of problems and handicaps. Internally, these problems figure as social, economic and moral problems, while externally they figure as international complications. But when we confront these problems, we find ourselves void of energy, foresight, guidance, and goals. In fact, we are in desperate need of a belief that can help us consolidate our powers. We need a unified *‘aqīda* to confront life and its problems, and ideology that will solidify our strength against our foreign and domestic enemies.<sup>210</sup>

According to Quṭb, the concept of peace in Islam derived from Islam’s outlook on the universe, life and humankind as one unit of creation wherein all are interrelated, illustrating the principle of peace and harmony among them. Based on this concept, humankind, which is part of God’s creation, has to maintain the peace and harmony that are inherent in the system of the universe. More importantly, Quṭb stated that there could be no grounds for dispute among believing people, because they were under one creed that called for complete surrender to God.<sup>211</sup>

From Quṭb’s discussion on peace in Islam, one might ask if Islam condemned all types of war. In other words, did Islam not allow any kind of war? Here, Quṭb explained that Islam recognized a war in which Muslims fought against those who,

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<sup>209</sup> Quṭb, *Islam and Universal Peace*, 5.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

by word or deed, challenged God's omnipotence and thus created injustice, oppression and all forms of corruption. However, such a war was permitted only when the unbelievers, who, in his view promulgated the worst kind of injustice, refused to accept the conditions imposed by Islam.<sup>212</sup>

Turning to the turmoil in global politics in the first half of the twentieth century, Quṭb said that Islam had its solution, which could bring peace to all nations. The concept of peace in Islam begins in the individual's conscience, then grows in the family circle, then amongst the community and finally amongst nations. Quṭb viewed that domestic and international peace would depend largely on co-operation and good relationships between individuals, families and communities at large.

Quṭb ended his discussion by stressing that only through Islam could universal peace be achieved, since it emphasized humanitarianism, moral conduct and striving for the sake of God (*jihād*). As for humanitarianism, he contended that the unqualified tolerance practised by Islam towards all humankind enabled societies to avoid conflicts caused by discrimination, power struggles, self-aggrandizement and material exploitation.<sup>213</sup> Moral conduct, he said, was a characteristic of Islamic principles applied to international relations. Thus, prejudice and political abuse were not Islamic, since they ignored religious values and morality. Quṭb cited the Prophet's tradition: "The messenger was sent to be a guide and not a tax collector."<sup>214</sup> He also wrote that Islam permitted *jihād* to Muslims if they were challenged or oppressed. In addition, *jihād* was allowed for the defence of fellow Muslims against oppressors and for the establishment of justice in society and throughout the world.

In this work, one finds that Quṭb understood Islam to be an all-embracing system whose teachings were applicable to the past, present and future. More

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<sup>212</sup> Quṭb, *Islam and Universal Peace*, 9.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.



interesting is that in his use of Islam to solve socio-political problems, he seemed more convinced by the importance of *‘aqīda* as an essential element of the Muslims’ struggle against the current challenges, than in his earlier works, *al-‘Adāla* and *Ma‘rakat*.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Quṭb’s socio-religious thought from 1947 to 1952 paralleled the social and political situation of Egyptian society itself. World War II and the post-war period were major factors that led the country into social, economic and political chaos and anarchy. In addition, the policy of the British and French governments towards Egypt had worsened the situation, for they not only interfered in the political affairs of the country but also left behind seeds of secular and Western capitalist thought to germinate in the minds of the Egyptians, in particular the aristocrats and bourgeoisie. As a result, exploitation and oppression continued throughout the country.

Quṭb, who identified himself with the social and religious concerns of the people, had become extremely disillusioned with the prevailing social ills and political system. His literary study of the Qur’ān coupled with his disillusionment gradually compelled him to find in Islam the solution to the current problems. *Al-‘Adāla*, *Ma‘rakat* and *al-Salām al-‘Ālamī* were a detailed analysis of these problems from the Islamic viewpoint. Quṭb’s main goals in these works were the social and political reform of the country and the establishment of justice. Islam could provide solutions because its treatment of problems was different from that of capitalism and communism.

The Islamic requirement of justice on the part of rulers, obedience on the part of the governed, and consultation between the rulers and the governed, would, according to him, not only put social justice into practice, but also strengthen the relationship between both parties and thus bring peace and harmony to society itself.

Social justice required the practice of all Islamic principles from spiritual matters to human social relations on the basis of faith in God. It was not merely limited to economics.

From an analysis of Quṭb's thought as reflected in *al-ʿAdāla*, *Maʿrakat* and *al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī*, it is clear that his ideas on social and political reform and his solutions to the current problems were developing in line with his deepening understanding of Islam. The environment also contributed to shaping his thought: *al-ʿĀdāla* was written before his leaving for America, whereas the other two books were written after his return from there. That is why these books contain similarities in their discussion, especially that of questions of Islamic doctrine. Quṭb wrote in *al-ʿAdāla*, for example, that Islam was an all-embracing system. The study of Islam inevitably required the study of its comprehensive theory, including that of the universe, life and humankind. Quṭb's emphasis on such a study aimed at calling his readers first to know their God and His creation in the true sense that included all living beings before they could understand other Islamic principles relating to their social affairs. This is because he regarded Islam as an "indivisible whole: its worship and its social relations, its laws and its moral guidance. Its devotional rituals are not separate in their nature or their goals from its provisions for government and social affairs."<sup>215</sup> Quṭb did not explain this doctrine in detail but rather encouraged his readers to study such concept, for it would help them to understand other Islamic principles including social justice.

In *al-ʿAdāla* Quṭb also aimed to expose the problems facing Egyptian society and to remind the Muslims in particular to seek the solution in Islam instead of being captivated by capitalist and communist agendas.

In *Maʿrakat*, Quṭb continued to stress the need for social and political reform based on Islam. His aim here was to identify the real enemies and hurdles to putting justice into practice in Egyptian society and politics. His experience of living in

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<sup>215</sup> Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla*, 12.

America enabled him to see the enemy in its true light and realize its intrusive power: that of Western imperialism. Quṭb also blamed the Egyptian authorities that co-operated with the West and their ignorance of the cries of the ordinary people living in poverty. In his view, in addition to the local exploiters and oppressors there were external factors that contributed to the calamity and destruction of Egyptian society. Thus arose in his mind a need to discuss the turmoil in global politics and its effect on Egypt and other Arab countries. *Al-Salām al-‘Ālamī* was his answer to the world crisis. This book indicated clearly Quṭb’s maturity of thought and his deeper understanding of Islam. His discussion of justice was no longer limited to individuals and the community, but now included its global aspect. *‘Aqīda* was the vital means to overcome any problems facing the *Umma* internally and externally. If they were united in belief and ideology, Muslims could confront their challenges and achieve social justice.

Quṭb’s demand for socio-political reforms, was more radical in *al-Salām al-‘Ālamī* than in the two earlier works, *al-‘Adāla* and *Ma‘rakat*. In this book he begins to use terms like *jihād*, the struggle to establish God’s sovereignty (*ḥākimiyyat Allah*) on earth.<sup>216</sup> These two terms, *jihād* and *ḥākimiyya*, are among several other new expressions used widely by Quṭb in his writings of the 1950s. Though he used them to support his discussion of establishing universal peace, it seems that he borrowed their interpretation from al-Mawdūdī and adopted this author’s idea of political struggle as manifested in his book *Jihād in Islam*. In *Jihād in Islam* al-Mawdūdī called for the establishment of an International Revolutionary Party to wage *jihād* against tyrannical governments. Its members were called “the functionaries of God” and their duty consisted in eradicating out oppression, mischief, strife, immorality, high-handedness and unlawful exploitation from the world by force of arms.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Quṭb, *Islam and Universal peace*, 72.

<sup>217</sup> Y.M. Choueiri, “Theoretical Paradigms of Islamic Movements” *Political Studies*, XLI (1993), 113.

### 2.5.1 An evaluation of Quṭb's Islamic thought before 1952

We have already found that Quṭb's literary study of the Qur'ān gradually led him to have an interest in Islam itself. Though he claimed that his examination of the Qur'anic verses was merely from the artistic point of view, it seems that at this stage (1945–1947), the seeds of his interest in Islam began to germinate. As Musallam states, "Despite his declared intent to deal only with the literary aspects of the Qur'ān, it is clear that Quṭb gradually began to emphasize the religious rather than the artistic aspect."<sup>218</sup> Quṭb himself admitted during his meeting with Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Nadwī that "his literary reading of the Qur'ān gradually led him to take a deeper interest in its religious messages, which eventually influenced him and guided him to faith."<sup>219</sup>

Between 1948 and 1952 Quṭb's Islamic thought was very much apparent in *al-ʿAdāla*, *Maʿrakat* and *al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī*. There is also no doubt that *al-ʿAdāla* was his first book on an Islamic topic and that it was also a radical departure from his early Qur'anic and social works published in the middle of the 1940s such as *Taṣwīr*, *Ṭīf min al-Qarya* and *Mashāhid*. Clearly, in *al-ʿAdāla* Quṭb began to stress Islam as a social and political force in the Muslim world. It is not merely a spiritual belief or a defunct system of morality but a concrete basis for human society, and superior to communism and capitalism. The other two books, *Maʿrakat* and *al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī*, were reflections of Quṭb's maturity of thought and greater knowledge of Islam as a way of life. More interestingly, these three works produced by Quṭb clearly indicate their author's state of mind, which was maturing against the complex literary, social, and political background of Egyptian society.<sup>220</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Musallam, *Formative stage*, 142.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>220</sup> Abu Rabiʿ, "Sayyid Quṭb: From Religious Realism," 106.



As well as giving a general analysis of the Islamic solution to Egypt's problems, Quṭb's Islamic works influenced a generation of Arab and Muslim intelligentsia between 1949 and 1952. *Al-ʿAdāla*, for instance, though its author was not yet a member of the Ikhwān at that time, expressed what the movement was promoting.<sup>221</sup> It is believed that the Ikhwān printed the book several times and asserted its author to be one of them. More interesting was that Quṭb's social reforms in *al-ʿAdāla* were also welcomed by the Egyptian masses, including the army officers. There were reports that the latter contacted Quṭb personally to point out how they had been influenced by his writings and to support his ideas on the need for greater social justice and reform.<sup>222</sup>

Quṭb's agitation for Islamic social and political reforms in this period reflected his attempt to present Islam as a system superior to any other known in human history. He aimed to challenge the influence of the capitalist and communist camps that were actively propagating their ideologies as the means to solve the country's social ills. Moreover, Quṭb realized that the current difficulties inevitably led the masses to be easily influenced by systems which promised them social justice and better living conditions:

When the millions of labourers who have no money to spend are told that communism will guarantee them a sufficiency and end the insolent luxury of the rich, the words will work like magic on them. And when they are told that communism will deprive them of freedom of work, freedom of speech and freedom of thought, they will not realize that it will deprive them of property which they own.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Chapter One describes how al-Bannā himself welcomed Quṭb's work and considered him to be a member of the Ikhwān.

<sup>222</sup> Fayyad, *The Study of Quṭb's thought*, 72.

<sup>223</sup> Quṭb, *Maʿrakat*, 19.

Quṭb believed that Islam was the only system that would free the people from subservience to either capitalism or communism, and provide dignity as well as freedom from the evils of strife and war.<sup>224</sup>

Though the Islamic solution proposed by him at this stage was seen by many as an ideal, one should accept the fact that Quṭb's understanding of Islam itself was still general. His concern was the applicability of Islam to different situations. The present situation in his view was unexceptional. It was not surprising, therefore, that his writings received criticism from some writers and scholars who pointed out the lack of argument throughout his discussions. C. Tripp, for instance, in his analysis of Quṭb's socio-political thought, held the opinion that *al-ʿAdāla* "does not dwell at length on how power can be harnessed to Quṭb's vision of the desirable Islamic order."<sup>225</sup> Therefore, he believed that Quṭb's aim in writing *al-ʿAdāla* was more to persuade people to accept Islam based on his own understanding.<sup>226</sup>

W.C. Smith and A. Mousalli, on the other hand, criticized the lack of a realistic construction of the economy as treated by Quṭb. Smith, as already noted, criticized Quṭb's limited discussion on usury. Mousalli was disappointed with Quṭb's cursory description of the concept of private ownership. According to him, despite Quṭb's emphasis on the responsibility of the community and the state to grant the needy some kind of ownership, he did not say how they should be helped to have a reasonable standard of living.<sup>227</sup>

Despite all the criticism, it is clear that Quṭb's efforts in searching for spiritual fulfilment were fruitful when he finally returned to the Qur'ān, studying and interpreting its message as an ideal which all Muslims were seeking. Abu Rabi's point of view seems to have some connection here, for he writes:

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<sup>224</sup> Quṭb, *Maʿrakat*, 34–38.

<sup>225</sup> Tripp, "Sayyid Quṭb: The Political Vision," 170.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>227</sup> Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, 195–196.

Quṭb's utilization of the Quranic text as aesthetics paves the way for a more general and perhaps imaginative use of the text as an ideological document in the 1950s and 1960s...Quṭb begins to understand the Qur'anic Weltanschauung as a belief system which is made up of the three interdependent categories – Metaphysics or/and theological doctrine; community or *ummah*, and legal and social regulations and behavior.<sup>228</sup>

Quṭb's constant revision of *al-ʿAdāla* till 1964 should also be considered. According to Shepard, "Of some 1063 paragraphs in the last edition of the book, only some 442 are totally without change from the first edition and many of these consist of quotations from the Qur'ān or other sources."<sup>229</sup> One should note, however, that Shepard's analysis takes account of every aspect of the changes made by Quṭb, including the correction of grammatical errors and misprints, without giving more attention to Quṭb's thought itself as reflected in the last edition of *al-ʿAdāla*. What is clear is that the modifications were mainly in his attitude towards Muʿāwiyya and the Banū Umayya. Although Quṭb still blamed them for replacing the Islamic system of government with a monarchy, his earlier severe criticism had become rather restrained. The rest of the changes comprised his increased emphasis on Islam as a stable, distinct and inwardly consistent religio-social order.<sup>230</sup>

Only after 1952 did Quṭb's writings take the form of a more radical Islam. At this stage, his Islamic ideological commitments were clearly manifested in various books and articles including his masterpiece, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, published in 1952. Also, his membership of the Ikhwān movement contributed towards his change of thought, thus concentrating his discussion on questions of *ḥākimiyyat Allah* (God's sovereignty), *sulṭa* (power) and *ʿubūdiyya* (servitude). In *Zilāl*, for instance, as well as elaborating on those questions already discussed in his previous Islamic writings,

<sup>228</sup> Abu Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins*, 106.

<sup>229</sup> William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), xxiii.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiv.

Quṭb tackled the epistemological foundation and ideological orientation of the Qur'ān in the light of what he saw as the needs of Muslims in the twentieth century. This is why it is particularly important to examine *Zilāl* to have a clear picture of Quṭb's thought after 1952, especially his treatment of the socio-political problems facing the Muslims of the modern era.



## Chapter Three

### *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*

#### (In the Shade of the Qur'ān)

#### 3.1 Introduction:

This chapter will deal with the historical background to *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*,<sup>231</sup> including how it came to be written and its objectives. It will also examine Quṭb's approaches in *Zilāl* and how they resulted in conflicting opinions between the author and other *Mufasssirūn* on certain issues mentioned in the Qur'ān.

Quṭb's interpretation of the Qur'ān began with the conviction that the Qur'ān was the true guidance for all human beings and thus the only valid source to direct their affairs. This belief, as mentioned earlier, emerged only after his progress through several stages of his career coupled with the strong influence of the current environment. For this reason, his *Zilāl* is very relevant to the modern world for it attempts to give consistent answers to the social and political problems facing Muslims today. In Quṭb's view, the establishment of a society in which Islamic teachings could be properly applied, was inevitable.<sup>232</sup>

Quṭb's understanding of and his approach to the Qur'ān as manifested in the *Zilāl* discussions provoked criticism from Muslim and non-Muslim writers. Some even argued about the originality of Quṭb's ideas: did they develop as a result of Quṭb's long study of the Qur'ān and his deep understanding of Islam? Were these ideas shaped by Quṭb's prison experiences?<sup>233</sup> It is also, therefore, the purpose of this study to examine the judgement of some Muslim and non-Muslim writers concerning *Zilāl*.

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<sup>231</sup> Referred to as *Zilāl* throughout this study.

<sup>232</sup> See, for instance, Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:209, 304, 328, 597; 2:657, 673, 767, 795, 874; 3:1388, 1735; 4:207; and 6:3334, 3342, 3344, 3345.

<sup>233</sup> For this second view, see, for instance, Sivan, *Radical Islam*, 25–26. See also Abu Rabi', *Intellectual Origins*, 169 and 170.

### 3.2 Background to the writing of *Zīlāl*

The twentieth century saw the emergence of various books of *tafsīr* written by Islamic scholars in their attempt to revive Muslim society to be in line with the Islamic teachings. They believed that the Qur'ān was the only solution to their current social dilemma. Their Qur'anic exegesis was thus aimed at elaborating the Qur'anic principles of law and urging the Muslim *umma* to apply them to daily life.<sup>234</sup> Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d.1897), Muḥammad 'Abduh (d.1905) and Rashīd Ridā (d.1935) are well known for their concern about the situation of the Muslim world and their efforts to solve its problems from the Qur'ān's point of view.<sup>235</sup>

In Egypt itself various books of *tafsīr* appeared in addition to 'Abduh and Rashīd Ridā's works. They include *al-Tafsīr al-Marāghī* by Mustafā al-Marāghī (d. 1945), *al-Jawāhir fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Shaykh Jawharī al-Ṭanṭāwī (d. 1940) and *al-Ṣafwat al-ʿIrfān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad Farīd al-Wijdānī.<sup>236</sup> These scholars, like 'Abduh and Rashīd Ridā, emphasized the need for Qur'anic reform of Muslim society to protect it against Western influences.<sup>237</sup>

Although the "return to the Qur'anic teachings" was their common priority, modern scholars of *tafsīr* employed various approaches to realize their objectives. According to Khālidī, differences in perception of the form of changes needed, coupled with the scholars' various educational backgrounds, produced a range of methodologies, including *al-Ittijāh al-Salafī* (the Salafī Orientation), *al-Ittijāh al-ʿIlmī* (the Scientific Orientation), *al-Ittijāh al-ʿAqlī* (the Rational Orientation), *al-*

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<sup>234</sup> Khālidī, *Madkhal*, 59–60.

<sup>235</sup> Al-Afghānī and 'Abduh, for instance, realizing the decline of the Muslim world, had called for an Islamic convention during the pilgrimage to Mecca in order to delineate the causes of the decline and initiate a design for revival. See Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 13–14. On the fear of Western influence among Muslim scholars and its political domination over Muslim countries, see also Khālidī, *Madkhal*, 59–61.

<sup>236</sup> Khālidī, *Madkhal*, 65–73.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

*Ittijāh al-Ijtimā'ī* (the Sociological Orientation) and *al-Ittijāh al-Ḥarakī* (the Movement Orientation).<sup>238</sup>

In his *tafsīr*, °Abduh, for example, used *al-Ittijāh al-°Aqlī*, *al-Ittijāh al-Ijtimā'ī* and *al-Ittijāh al-Dīnī*. According to modern researchers in *tafsīr*, he used *al-Ittijāh al-°Aqlī* quite often to interpret Qur'anic message.<sup>239</sup> Rashīd Ridā, on the other hand, employed *al-Ittijāh al-Salafī* in his *tafsīr*. His *tafsīr* began by exposing the social and economics disparity of the modern period as a result of Western influence and how Islam might tackle the problems by emphasizing the role of Qur'ān as a guide for all humankind.<sup>240</sup> The *tafsīr* of Ṭanṭāwī, however, has been regarded as the first ever produced which treated Qur'anic verses in the light of modern science. He discussed various aspects of science, including the universe, medicine, agriculture and industry, and the scientific truth. According to Ṭanṭāwī, this approach to the Qur'ān was in line with the contents of the Qur'ān itself: the verses on science (*°ulūm*) constituted 750 compared with those on jurisprudence (*fiqh*) which comprised only 150.<sup>241</sup>

The methodology and interpretation used by modern *mufasssirūn* seem to have been greatly influenced by their environment, coupled with the search for solutions to the problems facing the Muslim *Umma*. As a result, the Qur'anic text was interpreted in a wider context as the *mufasssirūn* tried to detect a universal message and show its relevance to the modern world. They also showed that the Qur'ān was not a dead text comprehensible only to the learned, but a dynamic, living text compatible with modern life. In this regard the conclusion reached by Galford seems to have some merit in describing the nature of modern *tafsīr*:

<sup>238</sup> Contemporary researchers in the field of *tafsīr* here refer to scholars like Dr Muḥammad Husayn al-Dhahabī (*al-Tafsīr wa'l-Mufasssirūn*), Dr °Abd al-Majīd al-Muḥtasib (*Ittijāhāt al-Tafsīr fī l-°Asr al-Ḥadīth*) and Dr Faḍl °Abbās (*Tiyārāt al-Tafsīr fī Miṣr wa'l-Shām fī l-°Asr al-Ḥadīth*). See Khālidī, *Madkhal*, 61.

<sup>239</sup> Khālidī, 62.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 67.



A number of traits mark modern (i.e., twentieth-century) *tafsīr*. One is a move away from the specific linguistic and philological study of individual words to a larger view of the *Sūra* (or parts thereof) as a whole... A second trait is the great emphasis placed on *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi'l-Qur'ān* (interpreting the Qur'ān using the Qur'ān). Commentators this century are on the whole, if not unanimously, against the use of extra-Qur'anic materials – at least explicitly – to elucidate the Qur'ān's meaning. Two further traits, related to one another, mark twentieth-century *tafsīr*. The first is that these commentaries make explicit ideas found in earlier works of commentary. Modern commentaries make binding what was never interpreted to be legal, compulsory, or even definite. There is one and only one correct reading of the Qur'ān for modern interpreters. This is due partially to the second trait, the new emphasis that modern commentators place on the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is to serve as the source of positive law, and as a weapon against Western encroachment.<sup>242</sup>

At this point, it seems that approaches employed by modern *mufasssirūn* differ from the traditional *tafsīr* written by the early Qur'anic scholars. A traditional *tafsīr* usually contained an explanation of the meanings and words of the Qur'ān together with a discussions on philology and jurisprudence. Also, to some extent, the Prophet's traditions (*ahadīth*) were mentioned in clarifying the Qur'anic meanings. This method of interpretation sometimes misled readers in understanding the text itself, since many discussions were included with the clarification of the text itself. As a result the discussions became “erudite, scholastic, and beyond the understanding of most Muslims.”<sup>243</sup> ‘Abduh, for instance, realizing this trend of the traditional *tafsīr*, called it something “unfortunate” for Muslims when “most of what has been written on *tafsīr*, leads the reader away from the guidance of the Qur'ān.”<sup>244</sup> Therefore, it became the concern of modern *mufasssirūn*, in particular, ‘Abduh and his contemporaries, to interpret the Qur'ān in a wider context and show its compatibility with the lives of modern Muslims. Their *tafsīr* attempted to attract

<sup>242</sup> Hugh S. Galford, “Sayyid Quṭb and the Qur'anic Story of Joseph: A Commentary for Today,” *Studies in Muslim – Jewish Relation* (1998): 4:43. On the modern trend of *tafsīr* in the twentieth century, see also J.M.S Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 125.

<sup>243</sup> Galford, “Sayyid Quṭb and the Qur'anic Story of Joseph,” 42.

<sup>244</sup> See Fayyād, *The Study of Quṭb's thought*, 85.



Muslims' attention to look to the Qur'ān as the source of religious and spiritual guidance. °Abduh viewed the Qur'ān itself not primarily as the source of Islamic law or dogma, or an occasion for philologists to display their ingenuity, but as the book from which Muslims ought to derive their ideas about this world and the hereafter.<sup>245</sup>

Quṭb represented the new generation of modern *mufasssirūn* of the middle of the twentieth century. His *Ẓilāl* discussions in many ways exhibited the modern tendencies described above, especially that the Qur'ān was to be treated in a manner that suited its universal message. More importantly, he related his interpretation of the Qur'ān to modern human society, believing that the Qur'ān's wording, if properly analysed, had the ability to awaken human consciousness. Thus philological studies and jurisprudential arguments did not attract his interest. In his commentary on verse 3 of *Sūra 5 (al-Mā'ida)* for instance, Quṭb made it clear that jurisprudential argument did not form part of his style in the *Ẓilāl*. Rather, he counselled that whoever wanted that should find it in the appropriate sections of the *fiqh* Book.<sup>246</sup>

Quṭb's writing of *Ẓilāl* began in the middle of the twentieth century. Earlier, in 1951, Quṭb had written some articles on Qur'anic commentary in the monthly magazine, *al-Muslimūn*,<sup>247</sup> under the heading "*Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*" (In the Shade of the Qur'ān). The first of his articles appeared with his commentary on "*Sūra al-Fātiḥa*" (The Opening) and "*Sūra al-Baqāra*" (The Cow), which was in seven instalments. His commentary on these two *Sūras* of the Qur'ān was received with great acclaim by his readers. They praised the wisdom and versatility of the writer in his presentation, choice of words and style.<sup>248</sup>

<sup>245</sup> J.J.G Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 24.

<sup>246</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:971.

<sup>247</sup> *Al-Muslimūn* was a monthly academic magazine introduced in 1951. It was owned by Sa'īd Ramaḍān, an active member of the Ikhwān. Quṭb was invited by Sa'īd Ramaḍān to be its editor and to take part in this Islamic and intellectual endeavour. Leading intellectuals and writers from all over the world were also invited to give their ideas and intellectual contributions to the magazine. See Khālidī, *Madkhal*, 40–41.

<sup>248</sup> Badmas L Yusuf, "The History of Fī Zilalil-Qur'ān," *Islamic Quarterly* (1997): 41:86.

Quṭb's contributions to *al-Muslimūn* lasted for just under two years, for he made it clear that he wanted to concentrate on producing independently a complete Qur'anic commentary in the form of a book. Thus his articles in the journal ended with his commentary on chapter 2 "*al-Baqāra*", verse 103 in early 1952.

The first volume of *Zilāl* was published in October 1952, to be followed by other volumes. By the beginning of 1954 Quṭb had produced 16 volumes. When he was gaoled for three months, from January to March 1954, Quṭb produced from prison another two volumes, thus bringing *Zilāl* the total to 18. After he was freed he did not produce any more further, because he was appointed chief editor of *al-Muslimūn*. However, he did not stay out of prison long, for, a few month later, he and several other members of the Ikhwān were again imprisoned on the allegation of being part of a plot to assassinate President Jamāl °Abd al-Nāṣir. This time he was sentenced to 15 years. Then he started writing the remaining volumes of *Zilāl*.<sup>249</sup>

It is important to note that the first 16 volumes of *Zilāl*, produced before Quṭb's imprisonment in 1954, discussed the beauty of the Qur'anic imagery. There is not much emphasis on *sharī'a* law and doctrine. This, however, changed gradually after his imprisonment, when the Qur'ān was studied as a dynamic text, capable of changing the whole structure of current society and offering solutions to the problems of the Muslim *umma* and its world, which was no longer Islamic.<sup>250</sup> He based the last three volumes of the first edition of *Zilāl* on this new approach.<sup>251</sup>

Quṭb's revised edition of *Zilāl*, in which he used his new approach, appeared in 1953. He was able to revise only the first ten volumes of *Zilāl*, covering contemporary issues of society: belief, legislation, politics and economy. The

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<sup>249</sup> Khālidī, *Madkhal*, 42–44.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 48. For a detailed explanation of Quṭb's view of the Qur'ān as a method of movement (*al-manhaj al-ḥarakī*) see Ṣalāḥ °Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālidī, *al-Manhaj al-Ḥarakī fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* (Jedda: Dār al-Manāra, 1986).

<sup>251</sup> Khālidī, *Madkhal*, 48.

remaining volumes, 11 to 27, could not be revised because of his illness and involvement with another trial, and then his execution in 1966.<sup>252</sup>

### 3.3 The Objectives of *Ẓilāl*

Quṭb's main objective in writing the *Ẓilāl* was to bring people back to the Qur'ān by establishing their interest in the text. He therefore encouraged people to read the Qur'ān not only to gain God's blessing but also to use its message as the source of guidance in facing the challenges of the modern age. From his observation, losing sight of the spirit of the Qur'ān was the major factor that had led to a wide gap between the Muslims of his time and the Qur'ān itself. Thus the *Ẓilāl* was Quṭb's attempt to show his readers how the Qur'ān was the true guide for all human beings and the only system suitable for their lives in both mundane and religious matters. Such guidance would make sense only when the Qur'anic message was properly studied and followed in the same way as in the early days of Islam. Quṭb's own experience in studying the Qur'ān led him to feel favoured (*nīma*) by living in its shade, as he states in the introduction of *Ẓilāl*:

Life in the shade of the Qurān is a favour, only those who have tasted it will appreciate it. It is a favour that uplifts the life force, blesses and purifies it. Praise be to Allah; He has indeed granted me life in the shade of the Qur'ān for a time. I have felt a taste of the favour which I never had before in my life. I have had a taste of this favour which uplifts, blesses and purifies the life force.<sup>253</sup>

Quṭb had several other objectives in mind when writing the *Ẓilāl*:

1. clarifying the role of the human being as the vicegerent of God.
2. teaching Muslims the Qur'anic principles.
3. establishing a just and ethical society based on the Qur'ān.
4. establishing the *sharīʿa* and *ʿaqīda* as the basis of an Islamic system.

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<sup>252</sup> Khālidī, *Madkhal*, 49.

<sup>253</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:11.

## 5. exposing the fallacy of materialistic thought.

### 1. The role of the human being as the vicegerent of God

Like Quṭb's earlier writings, questions of the universe, life and humankind were again stressed in *Zilāl*. The role of the human being as the vicegerent of God in this world was to worship God in the true sense, and organize his or her life according to the way of God (*manhaj Allah*). Humankind's relationship with the universe and all God's creatures in it was to be a co-operative one, based on a strong 'aqīda in God and the imposition of God's order on this world. Quṭb writes, for instance, in the introduction of *Zilāl*:

I lived in the shade of the Qur'ān, feeling the beautiful harmony between human actions as God wished them to be and the movement of this universe which God created...the human being is God's vicegerent on earth, and is human by virtue of having received God's breath from His spirit.<sup>254</sup>

### 2. Giving Muslims a Qur'anic education (*tarbiyya Qur'āniyya*)

This included educating Muslims on how to acquire a good Muslim personality, knowing their role as Muslims and managing their lives in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'ān. More importantly, they would soon begin to realize that following Qur'anic teachings enabled them to observe and measure their faith, so that it was in accordance with the God's command and His *manhāj* of life.<sup>255</sup> That is why in *Zilāl* one finds that the author's emphasis on the significance of faith (*īmān*) and its nature is paramount, owing to its strong influence on an individual's personal and social life.

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<sup>254</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:11–12. See also, for instance, 1:53,60; and 3:1272. On Quṭb's discussion of the harmony and conformity between human and the Universe, see for instance, 1:17–18, 421–422; 2:930–936; 4:2094; and 6:3492–3493.

<sup>255</sup> Khālidī, *Madkhal*, 103.



### 3. Establishing a just and ethical society based on the Qur'ān

As noted earlier, Quṭb's interpretation of the Qur'ān as the only true guide for human society was based on his own experiences and Qur'anic studies.<sup>256</sup> In his view, to translate the Qur'anic teachings into the reality of human society, politics and economics required the establishment of a just and ethical society governed by the Qur'ān. Quṭb discussed at length the first such Islamic society, established in Medina. He asserted that this was the society to be adopted as a model for Muslims of the modern age. Furthermore, his understanding of the revelation of the Qur'ān itself was to establish such a society:

This Qur'ān was revealed to the heart of the Prophet of God – Peace Be Upon Him – so that he would thereby establish a community, found a state, organize a society.<sup>257</sup>

### 4. *Sharī'a* and *ʿaqīda* as a basis of an Islamic system

It was also the objective of *Zilāl* to clarify to Muslims the relationship between the *sharī'a* and *ʿaqīda* in Islam and the influence of *ʿaqīda* upon the implementation of law and all other human practices. Quṭb stressed that a strong faith within a God-fearing soul constituted an important element in observing Islamic principles.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, the *sharī'a* of God would cease to function in human society unless there were God-fearing individuals who constantly remembered God and applied His laws to social, political and other aspect of human life.

### 5. Exposing the fallacy of Materialistic thought

*Zilāl* also attempted to shed some light on the fallacy of materialistic thought in this modern age. From his experience of a society where materialistic values governed

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<sup>256</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:14–15.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 2:875.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 3:1384.

the human mind and conduct, Quṭb concluded that such a philosophy was empty and against human nature. In his view, *‘aqīda* in God as the Lord of the whole universe and the absolute authority was a strong vanguard for Muslims to protect themselves from a materialistic temptation.

### 3.4 Quṭb’s approach in *Ẓilāl*

Before considering Quṭb’s approaches in *Ẓilāl*, it is important to look back to Quṭb’s development of thought through three important stages. The first stage began with his literary work, in which he became a well-known literary critic between 1926 and 1948. Later on, from 1948 to the early 1950s, he moved from literature to social criticism of the basic contradictions in Egyptian society, which he aspired to resolve. He found that Islam was the only solution to his country’s socio-political problems and struggled, together with the Ikhwān, against the existing order until his imprisonment in 1954.

The third stage began in prison and ended with his execution in 1966.<sup>259</sup> He finally emerged as an Islamic ideologue whose main concern was to see human society under an Islamic government. To this end he produced a more radical and open criticism of those in authority. In his view, the lives of Muslims were no longer Islamic. Terms like *jāhiliyya*, *jihād* and the establishment of the Islamic society (*al-mujtama‘ al-Islāmī*) and state (*dawla*) occupied most of his discussions.<sup>260</sup> Quṭb’s emphasis on those ideas perhaps reflects his personal ordeal of imprisonment and death sentence.

As noted earlier, Quṭb’s interest in the Qur’ān began only in 1939, when he started writing some articles on the artistic beauty of the Qur’ān. This interest was followed by the publication of *Taṣwīr* in 1945 and *Mashāhid al-Qiyāma* in 1947.

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<sup>259</sup> See Chapter One for details.

<sup>260</sup> For the discussion on *jāhiliyya* see for instance, Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:326; 3:1559; and 4:2012. On *Jihād*, see for instance, 1:184–185; 2:741; 3:1431, 1435, 1437, 1439; 4:2424–2425, 2426; and 6:3281, 3285, 3554.

While writing these two books, whose main theme was Qur'anic imagery, Quṭb hoped that one day he could produce a complete Qur'anic exegesis on the artistic beauty of the Qur'ān by following the direction of the theory that he had formed in *Taṣwīr*, and *Mashāhid al-Qiyāma*.<sup>261</sup> Quṭb wrote in *Taṣwīr* for instance, on the important principle of Qur'anic commentary:

*Taṣwīr* is a pre-eminent tool in the Qur'anic method. It designates with sensual dramatization the image of intellectual meaning (*al-ma'na al-dhihni*), psychological condition (*al-hāla al-nafsiyya*), perceptible events (*al-hādīth al-maḥsūs*), visible scene (*al-mashhad al-manẓūr*), human exemplar (*al-namūdhaj al-insānī*) and human character (*al-ṭabī'a al-bashariyya*). These transform into an image similar to individual life (*al-ḥayā al-shākhiṣa*), a renewed action (*al-ḥaraka al-mutajaddida*). Therefore the intellectual meaning transforms into an action or movement (*hai'a aw ḥaraka*), the psychological condition (*al-hāla al-nafsiyya*) becomes visible or perceptible (*lauha aw mashhad*), the human exemplar (*al-namūdhaj al-insānī*) becomes a lively person (*shākhiṣun ḥayyun*) and human nature (*al-ṭabī'a al-bashariyya*) becomes embodied or visible (*mujassama marī'a*).<sup>262</sup>

The above extract clearly indicates the method that Quṭb intended to use for Qur'anic commentary. He believed that such an experience could deeply affect the human heart, as he himself has been affected while interpreting certain verses of the Qur'ān. The literary beauty of the Qur'ān, he argued, had decidedly persuaded Arab leaders to convert to Islam.<sup>263</sup>

*Taṣwīr* had, therefore, added a new dimension to Quṭb's study of the Qur'ān, and its method was then employed in his coming thesis on Qur'anic studies.<sup>264</sup> Quṭb's plan was fulfilled when the first edition of *Zilāl* appeared in 1952. Here the author clearly stated that the purpose of his work was to express his appreciation of the artistic beauty of the Qur'ān, similar to the method used in *Taṣwīr*.<sup>265</sup>

<sup>261</sup> Khālidi, *al-Manhaj al-Ḥarakī*, 15.

<sup>262</sup> Quṭb, *Taṣwīr*, 36.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>264</sup> Khālidi, *al-Manhaj al-Ḥarakī*, 15.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 18.

Since it was in 1951 when Quṭb's articles on Qur'anic commentary began to appear in *al-Muslimūn*, it seems that *Zilāl* was begun during his reorientation from literary critic to radical social activist representing the impoverished Egyptians. It was also during this year that Quṭb joined the Ikhwān. Thus one question arises here: did the appearance of the *Zilāl* itself represent Quṭb's new orientation, to justice and equal rights or his new discovery when studying the Qur'ān from the artistic aspect? This question has created a difference of opinion among some scholars. Some consider that Quṭb no longer studied the Qur'ān from the artistic viewpoint. Rather, Quṭb's commentary saw Islam as the solution to Egypt's problems.<sup>266</sup> However others considered that the focus on the artistic beauty of the Qur'ān was Quṭb's main purpose in writing the *Zilāl*, independent of his ideological method (*al-manhaj al-fikrī*) in interpreting its meanings.<sup>267</sup>

In describing the historical background to the writing of *Zilāl*, Khālidī notes that the first edition of *Zilāl* published in 1952 initially represented Quṭb's ideas and his experiences at that time. In other words *Zilāl* was based on Quṭb's personal appreciation of the literary beauty of the Qur'ān, following a direction similar to that of *Taṣwīr* and *Mashāhid al-Qiyāma*. Khālidī further argues that Quṭb did not ignore the ideological approach (*al-manhaj al-fikrī*) in writing the first edition since such an approach had already occupied his mind following the publication of *al-Adāla* in 1949. It was only in the revised edition of *Zilāl* completed between 1953 and 1954 that Quṭb added a dynamic approach.<sup>268</sup>

Therefore it could be said that both artistic and ideological approaches (*al-manhaj al-jamālī wa'l-fikrī*) were important to Quṭb in the first edition of *Zilāl*. This

<sup>266</sup> See for instance Abu Rabi', *Intellectual Origins*, 169.

<sup>267</sup> This is the view of Rajā' al-Nuqāsh in *al-Hilāl*, vol. 85, 1977. See Khālidī, *al-Manhaj al-Iḥarākī*, 18–20.

<sup>268</sup> Khālidī, *al-Manhaj al-Iḥarākī*, 18.



was apparently due to the socio-political conditions in the country at that time, according to Quṭb's statement in the introduction:

Some people may regard it [the *Ẓilāl*] as a kind of interpretation or a survey of the general Islamic principles as put forward by the Qur'ān, or perhaps even as a study of the divine code of life and society shown in the Qur'ān. But, none of these considerations has been my intended purpose. All I have tried to do is to write down the notions that occurred to me (*khawātirī*) while living in such shades [i.e. *Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*].<sup>269</sup>

Quṭb's approach in his *Ẓilāl* differs from other *tafsīr* in that, while interpreting the meaning of the Qur'ān, he transported himself and his readers into an imaginary world similar to that of the early Muslims, who strove to follow the Revelation and apply its principles to their daily lives. In his view, only by living in such an environment could people truly understand the Qur'ān and its message and be motivated to follow its guidance. Quṭb said:

There is only one model and method of returning to God, which is to replace one's entire lifestyle with that system as is found in the Qur'ān....and it was the Qur'ān that established a new concept of existence, life, values and institutions.<sup>270</sup>

In his book, *Khaṣā'is al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī wa Muqawwamātuh*, published in 1962, Quṭb also stressed an effective means to understand and apply the message of the Qur'ān:

To understand the implications of the Qur'ān and the feelings inspired by it is not a question of knowing the words and phrases, what we usually call *tafsīr*. It is to provide the self with an asset of the feelings, the realizations and the experiences which accompanied its revelation and accompanied the Muslim community as it received it in the heat of action.<sup>271</sup>

<sup>269</sup> See Khālidi, *al-Manhaj al-Harakī*, 24. See also Fayyad, *The Study of Quṭb's Thought*, 85.

<sup>270</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:15–16.

<sup>271</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Khaṣā'is al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī* (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1982), 7.

Thus *Ẓilāl*, influenced by this viewpoint, can be described as a dynamic (*ḥarakī*) *tafsīr*. One often finds words like *iḥā'āt* (inspiration) and *ẓilāl* (shade), which indicate the author's attempt to go beyond addressing the literal and general meaning and convey to his readers the reality of the occasion with all its excitement and appeal.<sup>272</sup> Perhaps this is the significance of Quṭb's choice of title, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*: that is, to convey feeling as well as meaning.

These characteristics made Quṭb's commentary thoroughly modern in its approach, in the sense that he attempted to show the Qur'ān's relevance for all times and circumstances of human life. This differed from the traditional *tafsīr*, which, incorporated *aḥādīth* and philological studies where necessary to clarify interpretations of Qur'anic verses. In describing his method of Qur'anic commentary, Quṭb said:

The Qur'anic approach (*al-manhaj al-Qur'ānī*) never presents the ideology in the form of a theory to be studied, for this is the knowledge that establishes nothing in the conscience or in life. It is "cold" knowledge that neither controls caprices (*ahwā'*) nor frees one from the yoke of desires...Also it does not present studies in jurisprudence, the political and economic system, the natural and social sciences, or in any other form of knowledge. Rather it presents this religion as an ideology...moving (its believers) towards the realization of its practical contents from the moment it settles in the hearts and minds.<sup>273</sup>

The above was in agreement with 'Abduh's view that the Qur'ān was not primarily the source of Islamic law or dogmatics, nor an occasion for philologists to display their ingenuity, but the book from which Muslims ought to derive their ideas about this world and the world to come.<sup>274</sup>

We have therefore found that the modern *tafsīr*, as exemplified by Quṭb and 'Abduh, attempts to demonstrate that the Qur'ān is not a dead text comprehensible

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<sup>272</sup> Fayyād, *The Study of Quṭb's thought*, 88.

<sup>273</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 3:1399.

<sup>274</sup> Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran*, 24.

only to the learned, but a dynamic, living text, compatible with modernity and offering a lifestyle for Muslims to follow today while remaining true to their religious roots. In so doing, Quṭb sometimes went beyond the approach of other modern *mufasssirūn* and invited his readers into a kind of virtual reality similar to the environment in which the Qur'ān was revealed. An example is his commentary on “*Sūra al-Fath*” (48). Quṭb states in the introduction to the *Sūra*:

Before we begin explaining the contents of the *Sūra* and its significance, it would be better to look [first] into the nature of the event in which the *Sūra* was revealed so that we can feel [ourselves] living in the environment in which all [the early generation of] Muslims lived and learnt lessons from this revelation of the Qur'ān.<sup>275</sup>

Another important aspect of Quṭb's approach in *Zilāl* was his great emphasis on interpreting the Qur'ān using the Qur'ān (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi'l-Qur'ān*). This means that the Qur'ān is sufficient to guide humankind and can be correctly understood solely through its own expression. Quṭb reiterated his stand as follows:

The practice in this *Zilāl* is based on the principle that we shall not add anything to the issues concerning hidden things about which Allah is giving us just a speck [of information]. We shall therefore stop at [the information supplied] by the Qur'anic text and not go beyond that. It [the information so supplied] is, in itself, sufficient to establish the basics which Allah decided to reveal.<sup>276</sup>

The above statement does not mean that Quṭb rejected the role of the Prophet's *aḥādīth* (traditions). Indeed, he often referred to the *ḥadīth* not just to clarify the meaning of the Qur'ān, but also because the *ḥadīth* itself is one of the sources best fitted to an interpretation of the Qur'ān.<sup>277</sup> The only source that Quṭb excluded in the *Zilāl* was biblical materials (*Isrā'īliyyāt*) for his Qur'anic commentary. He explained:

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<sup>275</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3306.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 6:3634.

<sup>277</sup> Salahudin Kafrawi, “Method of Interpretating the Qur'ān: A Comparison of Sayyid Quṭb and Bint al-Shāṭi,” *Islamic Studies* 37, 1 (1998), 9.

I personally do not see any immediate necessity, in dealing with these fundamental subjects, to refer to any source other than the Qur'ān, except the sayings of the Prophet since they constitute reports about the Qur'ān. Any other opinion is insufficient, even if it is true, until the researcher (*al-bāhith*) can convince [us] that he found it in this extraordinary book (Qur'ān).<sup>278</sup>

As mentioned before, Quṭb's approach to *Ẓilāl* shifted from artistic and ideological approaches (*al-manhaj al-jamālī wa'l-fikrī*) to a dynamic approach (*al-manhaj al-ḥarakī*) during late 1953 and 1954. These periods, as we noted earlier, witnessed Quṭb's active participation in the Ikhwān against the unjust government, resulting in his 15-year prison sentence beginning in 1954. The prison experience, in which he was tortured and isolated from the outside world, gave Quṭb a new opportunity to study the Qur'ān more closely and discover the pure source of Islam from its contents. In addition, this new life enabled him to find in the Qur'ān and draw from it new guidelines for the modern world and the struggle to establish a just Muslim society. As Sivan writes:

Quṭb's [Qur'anic] ideas matured during his nine years in prison. The prison experience was to be, in effect, crucial in the making of most of the other New Radicals as well.<sup>279</sup>

According to Khālidī, Quṭb's prison's experience enabled him to see the real condition of the Muslims around him. Besides the corrupt government ruling the Egyptians at the time, there were other factors contributing to his fate and that of the Ikhwān. These included the weakness in the faith of the Muslims and the loss of the spirit of the Qur'ān in their hearts. This was apparent from their unfounded support of the unjust government, despite knowing about its oppression of Islamic groups and their fellow Muslims in particular.<sup>280</sup> They did not truly understand the

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<sup>278</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 3:1423.

<sup>279</sup> Sivan, *Radical Islam*, 25–30.

<sup>280</sup> Khālidī, *al-Manhaj al-Ḥarakī*, 28–29.



declaration of faith, “*lā ilāha illā ‘llāh*” which asked them to act in accordance with the requirements of the faith. In other words, they had moved far away from the Islamic principles stipulated in the Qur’ān, because they no longer lived in the spiritual atmosphere similar to that of the early generations of Muslim generation, in which the Qur’ān was revealed.<sup>281</sup>

All these were, perhaps, the issues occupying Quṭb’s mind at that critical time which led him to concentrate on the role of the Qur’anic movement (*al-Qur’ān al-Ḥarakī*) in solving the problems facing the Muslim *Umma* and the Egyptians in particular. In Quṭb’s view, the study of the Qur’ān as a dynamic text had been successful, especially during the early years of Islam. At that time, the Qur’ān had produced a generation of Muslims that not only studied the Qur’ān as the source of religious guidance but also practised its teachings in their daily lives.<sup>282</sup>

As described earlier, Quṭb managed to apply his new approach only in the last three volumes of the first edition of *Zilāl*. However, in his revised edition of the full *Zilāl*, it included all these approaches: artistic, ideological and dynamic. Nevertheless, the artistic and ideological approaches became much less important, for he believed that emphasis on the aspects of Qur’anic movement was more successful in attracting his readers so that they would feel the Qur’ān was really addressing them. As Tripp writes, Quṭb’s new dimension of thought led him believe that “the Qur’ān had given mankind the means whereby it could re-invent itself in the mould intended by the Prophet and, through him, by God.”<sup>283</sup>

Convinced by this new approach in Qur’anic commentary, Quṭb also called on his readers and scholars in *tafsīr* to follow in the same direction so that they could understand the true meaning of the Qur’ān. As he said:

<sup>281</sup> Khālidī, *al-Manhaj al-Ḥarakī*, 29.

<sup>282</sup> See for instance, Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3306–3316; and 4:1866.

<sup>283</sup> Tripp, “Sayyid Quṭb: The Political Vision,” 161.

This Qur'ān will be appreciated only by those who are ready to enter into this war [against *jāhiliyya*], and to struggle together in a situation similar to that in which it was revealed...and those who try to apply the Qur'anic meanings and its message while they are just sitting down, studying [its message] from the rhetorical and artistic points of view, will find themselves far removed from its nature because they are in a frozen state, from taking part in the real battle and movement.<sup>284</sup>

Furthermore, Quṭb expressed in the introduction of the revised edition his happiness and satisfaction at having reached an absolute and final certainty:

I emerged from this period of life – in the shade of the Qur'ān – having arrived at an absolute and final certainty (*yaqīn jāzim, ḥāsim*): that there can be no good for this earth, no repose nor satisfaction for humanity, no edification, no blessing, no purity, and no harmony with the laws of the cosmos and the quintessence of life, except through a return to God.<sup>285</sup>

For Quṭb “a return to God” had only one form and one way, that is, a return in every aspect of life to the way of God (*manhaj Allah*), which He had prescribed for humanity in the Qur'ān: “This way is the sovereign power of this Book (*taḥkīm hadhā al-kitāb*) in all of human life and the only source of appeal in the arbitration of the affairs of humanity.”<sup>286</sup>

This new dimension to Quṭb's thought brought him to the conclusion that the real struggle in his society was that between Islam on the one side and *jāhiliyya* on the other side. This struggle was between those who wanted Islam to govern human life and those who rejected the *sharī'a* of God, irrespective of their being Muslim or non-Muslim. Prison life also caused him clearly and painfully to see the Nasserite regime as *jāhili* and the Muslims who supported the regime as living in *jāhiliyya*, since the laws, morals and behaviour of society were based on *jāhili* concepts propounded by the regime. As described earlier in Chapter One, the concept of *jāhiliyya* became the main point of divergence between the thought of Quṭb and that

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<sup>284</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 4:1866.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 1:15.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

of al-Mawdūdī. Al-Mawdūdī considered only the political community – the ruling elite – is *jāhili*.<sup>287</sup>

### 3.5. Conclusion

As a whole, *Ẓilāl* has attracted the attention of Muslim and some non-Muslim scholars from all over the world. Although it lacks discussions of jurisprudence, compared with other traditional *tafāsīr*, *Ẓilāl*, with its author's distinctive approach to Qur'anic commentary, has the ability to awaken human consciousness and thus enjoys wide acceptance among various intellectual groups. That is why one will find that the book remains a ready reference for teachers, preachers, writers and sincere seekers of the truth all over the Muslim world.

In Chapter Four, our discussion will be focused on the content of the *Ẓilāl* especially Quṭb's treatment of the social and political problems facing Egyptian society and the Muslim *umma* as a whole. There, we shall see how Quṭb's approach and his method of interpreting the Qur'ān were employed to understand the Qur'anic message and how he presented its relevance for resolving the current crisis and for establishing justice in all aspects of human life.

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<sup>287</sup> On al-Mawdūdī's definition of *jāhiliyya*, see Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, 20.

## Chapter Four

### The Doctrinal Bases of Social Justice

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss Quṭb's notion of social justice as described in his *Zilāl*. First, however, Quṭb's understanding of the doctrinal concept (*al-taṣawwur al-ʿtiqāḍī*), including his analysis of the divinity (*ulūhiyya*), supreme authority (*rubūbiyya*) and sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*), will be studied, because from such belief he moved to expound his ideas on the Islamic way of life as a whole.

In the earlier discussion of Quṭb's socio-political thought as reflected in his writings prior to *Zilāl*, we found that his examination of a doctrinal concept deepened after joining the Ikhwān and after his exposure to al-Mawdūdī's and al-Bannā's thought. This could be seen, for example, in Quṭb's work, *al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī*, published a year before *Zilāl*. In this work, Quṭb tried to convince his readers that *ʿaqīda* had become a weapon strong enough to confront any evil desires that attempted to divert the individual from the right path. He also pointed out that the problems currently facing the Muslim *umma* and Egyptian society in particular were due to a lack of proper understanding of the doctrinal concept of Islam itself.

In Chapter Two we evaluated Quṭb's Islamic writings (*al-ʿAdāla*, *Maʿrakat* and *al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī*) prior to *Zilāl*. Although these works represented Quṭb's Islamic thought on questions about *ʿaqīda* and doctrinal belief as a whole, they lacked detailed elaboration of God's attributes such as *ulūhiyya*, *rubūbiyya* and *ḥākimiyya*. These attributes constituted important elements in Quṭb's understanding of the *tawḥīd* of God.

This chapter will therefore focus on three important elements: a general discussion of the basic principles of the doctrinal concept of Islam, including the *ulūhiyya*, *rubūbiyya* and *ḥākimiyya* of God, and their effects on human life; the nature of social justice in Islam; and finally, the foundations of social justice.



## 4.2 The doctrinal concept (*al-taṣawwur al-ʿitqāḍī*): *Ulūhiyya*, *Rubūbiyya* and *Ḥākimiyya* of God

Earlier, in Chapter Two of this study, Quṭb called upon his fellow Muslims to return to Islam to find a solution to the current problems and to examine Islam's comprehensive philosophy of the universe, life and humankind. In his view, a clear understanding of the universe, including all the activities in the heavens and on the earth and the harmony between the cosmos and life, would lead Muslims to a deep appreciation of Islam as a religion of unity, encompassing all elements of life. Quṭb stated in *al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī*, for example:

Islam is the religion of unity. It is the unity of all existence; inanimate, plant, animal and human. All activities in the cosmos are included and integrated in this unity, whether they concern the rotation of planets or the working of human minds. Islam finds unity in planets when following their eternal law as well as in souls when responding to their natural inclinations to acquire knowledge and implement justice.<sup>288</sup>

More importantly, the knowledge of such a theory would make Muslims more aware of their true position in life and more appreciative of their Creator. Quṭb further stated, "He is the One God who reigns over all beings and to Him they turn for refuge in this life and in the hereafter."<sup>289</sup>

It seems that Quṭb's understanding of the unity of Islam (which comprises all aspects from a single particle to the most advanced species of sophisticated life and the oneness of God Who reigns over all His creatures) led him to conclude that a study of any subject from the Islamic point of view must begin by examining the appropriate comprehensive theory. Therefore, the study of social justice in Islam inevitably required an examination of Islam's comprehensive philosophy of the universe and humankind. Quṭb wrote in *al-ʿAdāla*:

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<sup>288</sup> Quṭb, *Islam and Universal Peace*, 5.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

We cannot understand the nature of social justice in Islam until we first examine the general outline of Islamic theory on the subject of the universe, life and humankind. For social justice is only a branch of that great science to which all Islamic studies must refer.<sup>290</sup>

In *Ẓilāl*, questions of the theory of the universe, life and humankind seemed to be discussed by Quṭb at greater length than in his earlier works.<sup>291</sup> This is particularly apparent in his analysis of Islam's general approach to human life and questions of social justice. Regarding the role of humankind, Quṭb held the opinion that there was, by nature, a close relationship between human beings and the heavenly bodies. He maintained that human beings and the universe were integrated to work in harmony.<sup>292</sup> The basic principle was one of integration of humans and their fellow humans and the entire universe, and not one of war and mutual oppression. Thus, any form of unjust behaviour and wrongdoing in reality, contradictory to the unity of the universe, life and humankind.<sup>293</sup>

In the context of human life, Quṭb realized that the unity emphasized in Islam would harmonize people's worship and their social relations. It would reconcile the spiritual and the material aspects of humankind, the spiritual and the economic aspects and this world and the afterlife. Thus, problems arising in society would not be resolved individually or in isolation from other problems because all parts of the religion were closely correlated.<sup>294</sup>

Islam is based on the principle of the oneness (*tawḥīd*) of God, for it is from Him that all life issues and unto Him that it returns. Therefore, the study of Islamic theory (previously mentioned), in Quṭb's view, was a means of understanding the

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<sup>290</sup> Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla*, 21.

<sup>291</sup> For Quṭb's discussion about the universe see for instance, Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:152, 546; 4:2052, 2173, 2230; and 6:3792, 3803, 3865. On humankind's relationship with the universe, see for instance, Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 5:3090.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:1270. See also 5:3090.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:1270–1275.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:673.

principle of the *tawḥīd* of God, manifested in the phrase “*lā ilāha illā ’llāh*” – “There is no deity except Allah” (meaning that there is no one to be worshipped except God).<sup>295</sup> Quṭb then explained in detail concepts such as the *ulūhiyya* of God, His *rubūbiyya* and *ḥākimiyya*, convinced that a sound knowledge of them would strengthen the individual’s belief in God.

According to Quṭb, the principle of understanding the *tawḥīd* of God did not just require knowing the phrase “*lā ilāha illā ’llāh*” in one’s heart, but required the submission of the whole life of the individual to God. It required all human affairs, including the human ethical system (*al-niẓām al-akhlāqī*), political system (*al-niẓām al-siyāsī*) and social system (*al-niẓām al-ijtimā’ī*), with their foundations and components, to be derived (*munbasiqa*) from the *ulūhiyya* of God alone.<sup>296</sup>

Quṭb laid particularly strong emphasis on the *ulūhiyya* of God in *Ẓilāl*, because he believed that it was the basis of all Islamic systems, doctrines, legislation and ritual. The *tawḥīd* of God as manifested in His *ulūhiyya*, Quṭb maintained became the basis and centre of justice. He stated:

When people begin to recognize their God and worship Him alone, and when people are freed from submission to their fellow man and their own desires, there emerges the Islamic system that upholds justice in accordance with God’s command and establishes social justice in the name of God alone and not in any other form.<sup>297</sup>

Thus, as believers in the religion and in particular in the *tawḥīd* of God, it was a religious duty for individual Muslims to derive their values and standards, their legislation and morals from the *tawḥīd* of God. All institutions, economic and political, must be based on this principle. It was the focal point that distinguished Islamic society from other societies not based on the *tawḥīd*. The ultimate infidelity

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<sup>295</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:1005–1006.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 2:1009–1010.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 2:1008.

occurred when humans created a society and its laws independently of God. This, according to Quṭb, constituted a breach in the *tawḥīd* of God, which was the centre of justice.<sup>298</sup>

Before Islam, the world had witnessed humans worshipping different gods and idols, such as during the *jāhiliyya* period at Mecca. This *jāhili* society also indulged in the so-called “worship of man by man.” Its people conferred the right of trusteeship over other human beings to individuals instead of God Almighty. Thus, Islam came to liberate the people and abolish all forms of slavery by human beings. It limited the total submission (*‘ubūdiyya muṭlaqa*) on earth to the One God who controlled and sustained the entire universe and the life of all humankind. Quṭb quoted from the Qur’ān as follows:

Do they seek for other than the religion of God? – while all creatures in the heavens and on the earth have, willingly or unwillingly, bowed to His will, and to Him shall all be brought back.<sup>299</sup>

One might ask, why does Quṭb emphasise this doctrinal concept so strongly? And to what extent does it relate to social justice? Before we go further in discussing Quṭb’s notion of social justice and its characteristics, it is important to examine his personal view of this doctrinal belief.

According to Quṭb, *Sūra 6 (al-An‘ām)* clearly portrayed the significance of the true understanding of the doctrinal concept, *ulūhiyya and rubūbiyya* of God. Both demanded that all Muslims give their total submission (*‘ibāda*) to God alone, not to anyone else, and to adhere to His laws to liberate themselves from human

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<sup>298</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:1009.

<sup>299</sup> Qur’ān, 3:83.



enslavement and become the slaves of God.<sup>300</sup> Social justice could not be established in a society where slavery and the worship of man by his fellow man still existed.<sup>301</sup>

Islam did not advocate passive worship but, social reform or social revolution (*inqilāb ijtīmāʿī*). It aimed to abolish all rulership which demanded the worship of man by his fellow man.<sup>302</sup> Quṭb explained that in such a society, people based their values and standards, their ethics and morals, their institutions, legislature and laws on their own ideas instead of God's laws. There were also individuals who asserted that they had precisely the attributes of *ulūhiyya*, which belonged to God, and thus forced other people to worship them. Pharaoh was a typical example.<sup>303</sup>

The acceptance of the *ulūhiyya* of God, in Quṭb's view, was the recognition (*al-ʿtirāf*) that Allah was the Creator of this universe, life and humankind, Administrator of the universe, Ruler, Legislator, Law-giver, and King Who ruled over human life.<sup>304</sup> He alone deserved to be worshipped, no one else. It was complete submission to and worship of God. Therefore, any deviation from the true understanding of the *ulūhiyya* of God, including its characteristics of *rubūbiyya* and *ḥākimiyya* would ruin the whole structure of human life, since it was not based on the true foundations.

The *rubūbiyya* of God, in Quṭb's view, meant the recognition of God as Ruler, King and Legislator, Who ruled over every aspect of humankind. It also meant the abolition of other systems not based on the *sharīʿa* of God.<sup>305</sup> Therefore, every one's social, political and economic activities governed by the *sharīʿa* were manifestations of *rubūbiyya*. When people deviate from the *sharīʿa*, they would be in

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<sup>300</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:1005–1006.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 2:1006.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 3:1448. See also 1:378–379.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 3:1348.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 1:385. See also 3:1763.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 3:1346.

the category of those who committed *shirk*. In this regard, Quṭb's understanding of *rubūbiyya* was confined to human affairs in the sense that human beings should accept that God was the Law-giver and the Legislator. They should act according to the *sharīʿa* of God instead of following their desires or other man-made laws. For this reason, Quṭb viewed the continual struggle between Islam and the *jāhiliyya* as based on the *rubūbiyya* of God, since the *rubūbiyya* "is the question of religious belief and sovereignty, obedience and consent."<sup>306</sup>

In Quṭb's view, the *rubūbiyya* of God and His *ḥākimiyya*<sup>307</sup> (which also included in the overall meaning of *rubūbiyya*) meant God's sovereignty and His reign over human affairs and were inseparable from His *ulūhiyya*.

For the link between the *ulūhiyya* of God and His *rubūbiyya* is like the root and its twigs where the *rubūbiyya* becomes one of the characteristics of the *ulūhiyya* of God. In other word, the characteristics of the *ulūhiyya* of God can be described in terms of His *rubūbiyya*, and His *ḥākimiyya*.<sup>308</sup>

It seems that Quṭb's idea of the *ulūhiyya* of God, was derived from al-Mawdūdī's understanding of *ilāh* and *rabb* in his famous book, *Four basic Qur'anic Terms*. The *ulūhiyya* of God and His *rubūbiyya*, according to al-Mawdūdī, meant that:

Allah alone is the Lord, Master, and Ruler Who is the Sovereign of the Universe, life and mankind. Everything that exists, whether animate or inanimate, is bound by the laws made by Him and is, to that extent, subservient and submissive to Him, willingly or unwillingly.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 4:1910.

<sup>307</sup> The *ḥākimiyya* of God and its effect on human affairs is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five under characteristics of an Islamic state.

<sup>308</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 3:1823.

<sup>309</sup> Mawdūdī, *Four Basic Qur'anic Terms*, 20–21.

If people had true understanding of *ulūhiyya*, *rubūbiyya* and *ḥākimiyya*, Quṭb believed that they would be guided towards God, because they would soon realize the nature of existence, as well as their place and their goal in it. This is, of course, in line with *Sūra* 51 (*al-Dhāriyāt*) verse 51, which states, “And I (Allah) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone).”

Quṭb interpreted this verse to mean that worship (*‘ibāda*) was the main purpose of human creation in this world. Those who were not aware of that were living a meaningless life. They had no clear direction in their worldly activity in the sense that they should be striving for God’s pleasure.<sup>310</sup> Furthermore, the unity between humankind and the rest of God’s creation, including the *jinn*, was bound under the *ulūhiyya* of God, when all those creatures worshipped the same God.<sup>311</sup>

In another instance, Quṭb contended that the complete purification of human hearts from worshipping any but God alone would soon enable a just and sound society to be achieved. This was because only such a group of people, whose beliefs, worship and laws were completely free of servitude to anyone but God could create a Muslim community.<sup>312</sup>

Thus, Islam’s approach to social justice was, according to Quṭb, inseparable from the all-embracing universal nature of this religion, including the concept of the *ulūhiyya* of God, the universe, life and humankind. Since all aspects of the religion were closely correlated, it became impossible to understand human social and political affairs without referring to basic principle: *tawḥīd*, where all existence is issued directly from one comprehensive and absolute Will.<sup>313</sup> Verses 82 and 83 of *Sūra* 36 (*Yāsin*) clearly demonstrated this, for they explained that everything was created by God’s Will without any intermediary between the Creative Will and the

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<sup>310</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 6:3387.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:3387.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1011.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1006–1007.

created beings. There was no difficulty in God's creating all His creatures, the earth and the universe, for they had all been created in the same unified manner.<sup>314</sup>

With his strong belief in the *tawḥīd* of God as the basis of human society, and the unity of all God's creation, Quṭb proceeded to a detailed discussion on the nature of social justice and its characteristics in Islam. An analysis of Quṭb's earlier discussion on the doctrinal concept of Islam suggests that his continued emphasis on the significance of observing the Islamic theory of the universe, life and humankind was intended to make people recognize the nature of the *ulūhiyya* and *rubūbiyya* of God and the belief that only by studying this theory would they know their Creator.

### 4.3 Social justice: Its nature

Quṭb's firm belief in the *tawḥīd* of God and the unity of His creation was the basis from which he proceeded to address the entire range of human problems and apply solutions to them.

Life, according to Quṭb, should feature co-operation and integration between all human beings to create a just and sound society. Humans by nature loved peace and harmony: no one liked to be exploited, oppressed or dealt with unjustly by others. Such behaviour was contradictory to Islamic principles. This meant that human-beings (*al-nās*) were by nature integrated and accountable to a permanent Divine Justice, following the harmony that existed in the rest of God's creation, such as the cosmos, the natural world and so on. Following this principle, Quṭb maintained that establishing justice was the duty of all humankind, irrespective of belief.<sup>315</sup>

One may ask that if humans have a natural love of justice and peace, why do oppression and exploitation still exist? In this regard, Quṭb realized that once God's program (*manhaj*) was ignored, and people followed their own desires instead of

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<sup>314</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 5:2978.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:688–689, 775.



God's command, then oppression and conflict would be the result. This was because different people had different ways of thinking as long as they had no central guideline for reference. Only the *manhaj* of God was just to all humankind, since it was neither influenced by human desire, nor biased in favour of certain groups of people. The program itself came directly from the one Lord, "Who is God for all beings and [truly] nothing is hidden from Him, in the earth or in the heaven."<sup>316</sup> Thus it was Divine Justice found within the *manhaj* of God which was perfect, eternal, irrespective of time and place, and designed for universal application to everyone.<sup>317</sup>

If we look at the history of humankind, it seems that people have always been in crucial need of justice in their lives. This can be seen, for instance, with the emergence of various theories and views by thinkers and philosophers on how to create a just socio-political order. Plato, for instance, defined justice as harmonious relationship between the various parts of the social organism. Every citizen, therefore, must do his duty in his appointed place, and do that for which his nature was best adapted. Plato thus envisaged an ideal but class-oriented society wherein people were naturally unequal, yet justice was a paramount virtue to be administered by the best men who could be trusted not to abuse their powers. This would mean that justice was to be administered under the rule of men and not to be observed under the rule of Law.<sup>318</sup>

Aristotle's concept of justice was, on the other hand, rooted in equality and the just distribution of wealth within the community. This equality, in Aristotle's view, was to be based on merit and the level of contribution. This meant that the

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<sup>316</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:379. See also Qur'ān, 2:284; and 3:5.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:774, 777.

<sup>318</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, trans. A.D. Lindsay (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976), 119–121. See also, R.M.W. Dias, *Jurisprudence*, 5th edn. (London: Butterworth, 1985), 74.

people making the greatest contribution to their society would have the greatest share of monetary reward, honour and political office.<sup>319</sup>

There were also among Muslim scholars those who had suggested means of realizing social justice, like Ibn Khaldūn<sup>320</sup> (d.1408) and Ibn al-Azraq<sup>321</sup> (d.1491). According to Ibn Khaldūn, justice was central in the social theory of society where its achievement was dependent on the application of the *sharīʿa* law to human affairs. If the laws of a certain society had come to be disregarded, that society would be completely destroyed and demoralized.<sup>322</sup> Ibn al-Azraq, on the other hand, believed that the achievement of justice in human society would depend on rulers who took office because of its prestige and the power they could wield over their people. He believed that the ruled could play their role in prevailing upon their rulers to espouse justice by two means: firstly, by demonstrating that the evil consequences of injustice would undermine the rulers and lead to the destruction of their regime; and secondly, by convincing the rulers of the advantages to be obtained from a just government policy.<sup>323</sup>

Modernists like al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh also gave some thought to the ideal standard of justice. According to al-Afghānī, only a society that possessed higher religion was capable of establishing and maintaining justice. With the spiritual and religious strength among members of the society, it was possible to observe and

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<sup>319</sup> Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. E. Barker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 129. On discussions of Aristotle's concept of justice see Edgar Bodenheimer, *Jurisprudence, the Philosophy and Method of the Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 180. See also Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic conception of Justice* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 174.

<sup>320</sup> His full name was ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad. He was born in Tunis on 27 May 1332. He served as a teacher, diplomat and judge throughout his life. Among his famous works were *Prolegomena (al-Muqaddima)* and the history of North-West Africa. See Khadduri, *Islamic Conception of Justice*, 182–189.

<sup>321</sup> His full name was Abū ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Azraq. He was born in Malaqa (Malaga), Spain in 1427 and became a judge there before moving to Gharnāta (Granada) to become Chief Judge of Granada in Spain. See Khadduri, *Islamic Conception of Justice*, 190–191.

<sup>322</sup> Khadduri, *Islamic Conception of Justice*, 188–189.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

check on rulers and restrain them from oppression and injustice.<sup>324</sup> ‘Abduh, on the other hand, believed that justice could be achieved by the judicial system, which would need continual reform to meet changing conditions.<sup>325</sup> Both al-Afghānī and ‘Abduh to some extents, used reason as a basis for a system of justice which was comparable to Divine Justice. They also tried to conform to Western theories.

The above views of Muslim scholars clearly show their belief that justice was a necessity in society. Though opinions and theories of its definition varied, all the scholars agreed that justice could be achieved by following the divine source. The debate arose over how Divine Justice should be realized on Earth and this reflected their different backgrounds (Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn al-Azraq lived in an age when the Islamic community was in decadence).<sup>326</sup>

Quṭb’s approach to social justice could be considered a response not only to the social and political problems facing his society at that time (as described in Chapters One and Two), but also to the endless disputes among scholars in providing reliable criteria for measuring the level of justice in social order. Owing to the continuing decadence in the Muslim world and the failure of earlier scholars in reaching a permanent measurement of justice, Quṭb chose to look for a solution in the roots of the religious doctrines described above. This can be seen from his statement that:

With the passing of generation after generation after the miracle period (the Prophet’s period), many libraries began to be filled with books on jurisprudence and law...many leaders started to speak about justice, and many tongues started to talk about its application... there were various theories, means and plans suggesting its full application but the only true

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<sup>324</sup> Khadduri, *Islamic Conception of Justice*, 198–199.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 191.



means of realizing justice in human conscience and life is from within that *manhaj* of God.<sup>327</sup>

Quṭb added that true justice was “justice by which the Muslim community dealt with God directly, free from any [human] passion or desire or interest.”<sup>328</sup>

Quṭb viewed Islam as the religion of justice because it took an open approach to it. Thus any means of achieving social justice would be recognized and upheld by Islam, unless, of course, the means themselves contravened Islamic principles. Justice should be the embodiment of God’s Will and should not be influenced by any individual or group interest.<sup>329</sup> Therefore, it should be derived from the Islamic view of life, the universe and humankind, all united under God’s Will and His Control. Justice would be achieved only in a society based solidly on a true understanding of such a doctrinal concept.<sup>330</sup>

Justice literally means “the putting of something in its rightful place, the place where it belongs.”<sup>331</sup> Perhaps it was with this definition in mind that Quṭb called upon his fellow Muslims and everyone else to return to the one belief (*‘aqīda*): a belief in the *tawḥīd* of God and His Justice, whereby everyone would be treated fairly without discrimination in colour, race, sex and so on. Elsewhere, Quṭb referred to justice in human society as being closely related to equality, in that it aimed to establish equilibrium in the distribution of rights and duties, advantages and burdens

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<sup>327</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:777. In Quṭb’s earlier work, *al-‘Adāla*, he had also stated the necessity of Muslims returning to their own resources in their search for social justice. They should not look into the views and writings of earlier philosophers of Islam like Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd or others whose ideas according to him, were nothing but a shadow of Greek philosophy. See Quṭb, *al-‘Adāla*, 22. For a detailed discussion about the influence of Greek philosophy on Muslim philosophers and scholars, see Khadduri, *Islamic Conception of Justice*, 78–105.

<sup>328</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:774.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., 2:890.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 2:1006.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 1:379.



among the members of the community in their search for God's pleasure.<sup>332</sup> Therefore, justice, in Quṭb's view, was essentially a social concept. Its basis was social relations and would have little meaning when applied to an individual in isolation from society.

According to Quṭb, the centrality of justice to the value structure of Islam was portrayed clearly in the Qur'ān. As God said: "We sent our Messengers (*rusulanā*) with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and measure in order to establish justice among the people."<sup>333</sup> The phrase "our messengers" confirmed that justice had been the goal of all the scripture revealed to humankind. Furthermore, it was this justice that established a peaceful, co-operative and kind society, since it was administered in accordance with the *manhaj* of God and measured by its standards.<sup>334</sup> Quṭb further maintained that the "measurement" (*al-mīzān*) in the above verse was a Divine measurement (*al-mīzān al-Ilāhī*), that is, a permanent guideline for everyone: "Without this permanent Divine measurement (*al-mīzān al-Ilāhī*) as part of the *manhaj* of God and His law (*sharī'atuh*), people will not genuinely achieve any justice."<sup>335</sup>

Here, Quṭb was in agreement with Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d.1350), who grasped the essence of the above Qur'anic declaration in his statement: "Justice is the supreme goal and objective of Islam. God has sent scriptures and messengers to establish justice among people...any path that leads to justice is an integral part of the religion and can never be against it."<sup>336</sup> Elsewhere, he said:

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<sup>332</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:1006–1007.

<sup>333</sup> Qur'ān, 57:25.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 6:3494.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Ṭuruq al-Iḥkmiyya fī'l-Siyāsa al-Sharī'yya* (Cairo: Mu'assasa al-ʿArabiyya li'l-Tabāʿa, 1961), 16.

The Law-Giver has not confined the ways and means that attain justice, nor any of its signs and indications, to the exclusion of other evidence...He declared justice as His overriding objective and also explained some of the means towards attaining it, but then commanded that it should be the basis generally of all adjudication and government.<sup>337</sup>

At this point, it would appear that Quṭb's view of justice paralleled the view of Ibn Qayyim in that both placed more emphasis on the means of its establishing than on the meaning of its concept.

According to Quṭb, Islam required absolute justice (*al-ʿadl al-muṭlaq*), regardless of differences in colour, sex, race and belief. This was because it was based on the command of God. Therefore, Muslims must deal justly in all matters pertaining to human affairs, whether those of fellow Muslims or people of different religious beliefs.<sup>338</sup> In another instance, Quṭb considered the administration of justice a trust from God to all His believers. He viewed the revelation of verse 58 of *Sūra* 4 (*al-Nisā'*) as clearly asking the believers to be just not only among themselves but also to people of other religions.<sup>339</sup> Commenting on this verse, which says: "when you judge between men, you judge with justice," Quṭb argued that applying justice was a sign of belief in God and His messengers. This was because it required sacrifice, and might even cause personal loss or loss by parents and other relatives. For this reason, those who could cope with this burden and stand firmly for justice were surely among the true believers, for they had proved their faith (*īmān*). Owing to these people, Quṭb stated, "justice and truth had been maintained in spite of the requirements for tremendous sacrifice on their part. Manipulation, exploitation and other acts of injustice were not condoned by these true believers."<sup>340</sup>

<sup>337</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *ʿIlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Wakīl (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīth, 1969), 4:461-462.

<sup>338</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:689.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:775.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*

A question, however, does arise here: if Muslims are required to apply justice, since this is one of the characteristics of true believers in God, how is that justice to be upheld or measured? Did Islam merely require them to administer justice without rules or laws by which they should control their actions? In this regard, Quṭb believed that it was the Divine measurement, manifested in the Qur'ān and the Prophet's traditions, that Muslims were to follow so that their desires would not be able to cheat them and lead them astray.<sup>341</sup> Men's minds, Quṭb added, were:

always affected by various effects. There is nothing that can be called "human mentality", that which would lead to an absolute guideline [which all people can follow]. Instead, there is my mind, your mind, his mind and so and so...there must therefore be a permanent measurement to which all those minds could refer so that they will know the extent of wrong and right in terms of rules and perceptions...a permanent measurement in the sense that it would not be affected by desire and other influences.<sup>342</sup>

Elsewhere, Quṭb maintained that the justice on which the Islamic system of life (*manhaj al-ḥayā*) was based was guaranteed by God, where every individual would be dealt with justly in accordance with His command. Therefore, hatred, anger and ill-feeling had no place here and could not be allowed to influence or prevent anyone from upholding justice and maintaining the truth. Such feelings existed only in a society based on man-made laws and very much influenced by human desires rather than an active search for the truth.<sup>343</sup>

Therefore, upholding justice was a duty for every Muslim before God. There was a clear command from God in the Qur'ān:

Say: My Lord hath commanded justice: and that ye set your whole selves (to Him) at every time and place of prayer, and call upon Him, making your

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<sup>341</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:690–692; and 6:3918.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:690.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:890.

devotion sincere as in His sight: such as He created you in the beginning, so shall you return.<sup>344</sup>

In this verse, though the command was directed at the Prophet, its substance was also directed at all Muslims. Moreover, rendering justice ranked as the most noble act of devotion next to belief in God, since it is the greatest of all duties entrusted to the Prophets and it is the strongest justification of the vicegerency (*khilāfa*) of humankind on the earth.<sup>345</sup>

Despite his belief in the ability of Islamic justice in solving human problems, Quṭb, as noted earlier, admitted that upholding justice was a difficult and burdensome duty. He realized that one should not be influenced by emotions, desires, family ties and love, because in doing so, one might be diverted from the truth.<sup>346</sup> Justice was particularly difficult when they (the believers) had to apply it to their enemies. Verse 8 of *Sura 5 (al-Mā'ida)*, according to Quṭb, clearly prohibited the believers from feeling hatred even towards their enemies. Justice must be maintained, since it brought enormous benefits to both Muslims and non-Muslims and, more importantly, upholding justice indicated these true believers in God.

Quṭb's call for the establishment of justice, it might seem to be based more on a theoretical framework than on its applicability in practical human life. Therefore, his view was apparently no different from that of the early scholars who disagreed merely over a methodological failure to relate the theory of justice to practice.<sup>347</sup> However, the following statement by Quṭb, might clarify his stance on this point:

absolute justice would not be achieved in human life, and its application could not be maintained (constantly) similar to that of the management of the universe..[truly] this would not be achieved except by the

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<sup>344</sup> Qur'ān, 7:29

<sup>345</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:25–60.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:776–777.

<sup>347</sup> Khadduri, *Islamic Conception of Justice*, 193.



implementation of the *manhaj* of God which He chose for human life explained in the Qur'ān...otherwise there would be no fairness and justice ...and there would be no integration of human activities into the universe nor co-operation between them.<sup>348</sup>

Quṭb added:

Islam is the religion of submission and obedience...it would not be considered a religion in the sight of God if it is merely a theory coming from the mind or merely an acknowledgement in the heart...but such theory and recognition need to be stimulated into reality...that is, an arbitration with the *manhaj* of God in all human matters.<sup>349</sup>

Quṭb also stated in *Ma'ālīm* that "this general call to liberate humankind on earth from all power that is not the power of God was not theoretical, philosophical nor passive ...it was dynamic, active and positive."<sup>350</sup> According to him, human history had shown that only when people followed the Qur'ān and judged their lives in accordance with its teachings, would they feel the taste of justice.

It was within the context of this belief that Quṭb mentioned the state<sup>351</sup> and the Muslim community as having an important role in achieving justice. Quṭb maintained that, in addition to enforcing the *sharī'ah* law, the state should provide its people with educational and employment opportunities and other facilities to enable them to lead independent lives. Each individual had the right to employment, accommodation, etc., which should be provided by the state because they were of great necessity (*ḍarūriyyat*) to human life.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:379.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 1:377.

<sup>350</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Ma'ālīm fi'l-Ṭarīq* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1980), 68.

<sup>351</sup> A detailed discussion on the state and its objectives is given in Chapter Five on the practical dimension of social justice.

<sup>352</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:882.

While the state provided the facilities, the people, for their part, should strive hard for their own socio-economic well-being. This was because Islam attached great importance to hard work and lawful earnings.<sup>353</sup> Indeed, Islam condemned those who did nothing and remained idle. However, there were those who worked hard, but earned insufficient to meet their basic needs. Quṭb believed that it was the responsibility of the state and the private sector to help the poor and needy people under the institution of *zakāt* and other voluntary charity,<sup>354</sup> the basic principle being mutual love and respect and co-operation and solidarity between individuals and the community. Therefore anyone deviating from this principle, must be brought back to it by any means possible. It was more appropriate to follow the *manhaj* of God in this universe.

Quṭb maintained that it was also the aim of the *sharīʿa* law to bring deviants from the principle of justice back to the *manhaj* of God. For example, Quṭb regarded stealing as being a deviation from the principles of harmony and peace, because the thieves were really trying to make trouble in their society and usurp the rights of others. Quṭb believed that they were more influenced by greed and selfishness than the fulfilment of their basic needs. Islam provided the means of fulfilling human needs either by working or by sharing the wealth of the rich through *zakāt* and *ṣadaqa*. The appropriate punishment, therefore, was inevitable to bring these people back to the *manhaj* of God.<sup>355</sup> This, according to Quṭb was laid down in verse 38 of *Sūra 5 (al-Māʿida)*, when God said, “As for the male and female thief, cut off their hands, a recompense for what they earned, punishment from Allah, and Allah is Mighty, Wise.”<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:882–883.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid. A detailed study of *zakāt* and its institution is given in Chapter Five of this thesis under the heading of wealth and social equity.

<sup>355</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:883–885.

<sup>356</sup> Qurʾān, 5:38.

In Quṭb's view, Islam's approach to social justice was all-embracing in that everything was taken into consideration to create a just society where all Muslims were gathered together as one community. To maintain unity and co-operation in that community, people had to know the laws by which they operated. It was, therefore, the law of God that could preserve this unity. Quṭb interpreted verses 9 and 10 of *Sūra 49 (al-Hujarāt)*, for instance, to mean that love, co-operation and unity would become characteristic of the Muslim community. Though conflict and violence might erupt among the Muslims, it should be the exception, and those deviating from the truth should be restored to their proper place as Muslims. This is shown in Quṭb's statement: "It becomes a [religious] obligation upon the Muslim *umma* to be just to all humankind, even though in doing so they may face difficulty and struggle."<sup>357</sup>

Quṭb's statement is based on the following verse of the Qur'ān:

If two parties of the believers fight, put things right between them; then, if one of them is insolent to the other, fight the insolent one till he reverts to God's commandment. If he reverts, set things right between them equitably, and be just.<sup>358</sup>

Quṭb's view of social justice was apparently derived from his belief in the absolute justice of Islam within the *manhaj* of God, including the recognition of the *tawḥīd* of God, that is, His *ulūhiyya*, *rubūbiyya* and *ḥākimiyya*. The practical application of this *manhaj* to human society would not only achieve justice but also bring humankind into line with the rest of God's creation in this universe. Moreover, it was this justice, based on the *tawḥīd* of God, which

1. treated human beings as individuals with liberty and equality as their birthright;

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<sup>357</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:852.

<sup>358</sup> Qur'ān, 49:9.

2. provided them with equal opportunities of developing their personalities and, more importantly, their talents so that they were better fitted to fill the situations to which they were entitled;
3. regulated their relationship with society in such a manner that, far from being harmful to the interests of society, they made their own contribution to its moral values and welfare;
4. freed the human spirit completely from the pressure of economics and the pressure of the authorities that controlled the sources of wealth; and
5. created an absolute, balanced and harmonious unity and general solidarity between individuals and groups so that they could work together to build and develop their lives and direct them in accordance with the laws of God. This meant that both individuals and the community were given the freedom of life within the bounds of the *manhaj*.

#### 4.4 The Basis of Social Justice and its Objectives

Islam established social justice on a social basis. This means that the Islamic theory of justice has a practical application to human society. It is not merely a religious theory in a world of shadow or verbally expressed without any relevance to the reality of human life.

Earlier, we mentioned Quṭb's emphasis on the need to look back to the Islamic teachings on the universe, life and humankind, and the *tawḥīd* of God, in particular, for he believed that all Islamic systems, doctrines, legislation and ritual were built on those fundamental ideas. For this reason, social justice, which constituted part of the Islamic way of life, must be studied from that perspective, since the religion of Islam, Quṭb stated:

..does not tackle life's problems in fragments, for it does not set up an independent principle to solve each individual problem. It makes from its comprehensive theory an axis around which all other problems revolve.



Thus, the different issues are linked, tightly or loosely, to the axis, and the whole complex forms a unified religious outlook.<sup>359</sup>

The basis of social justice is built on three important elements: (1) absolute freedom of conscience; (2) the complete equality of all human beings; and (3) solidarity.

#### 4.4.1 Freedom of Conscience

Part of the basis on which Islam established its regulation for social justice was the freedom of the human conscience from all impulses within the human soul that might lead people to destruction. This was because a peaceful and harmonious life could be established only when people had successfully brought under control their inmost desires and protected them from being defeated by negative elements that Islam sought to abolish. These included associating other people or objects with God (*shirk bi'llāh*), greater attachment to families and other materialistic values than to God's blessings (*marḍātillah*), and following the evil desires within the soul.<sup>360</sup>

According to Quṭb, freedom of the human conscience from associating others with God meant to be free from servitude and submission to anyone but God. Since God was the Creator of humankind and all other creation, He alone was to be worshipped and offered submission (*ʿubūdiyya*).<sup>361</sup> Quṭb regarded this form of *shirk* as including submission and obedience to those holding a special post in society, such as rulers. Islam, Quṭb held, did not forbid Muslims to obey those in authority and to co-operate with them towards the betterment of their affairs. However, it strongly forbade any obedience to those in authority, which resulted in the slavery of man by man, since this contradicted the doctrinal concept of Islam mentioned

<sup>359</sup> Quṭb, *Islam and Universal Peace*, 5.

<sup>360</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:373–375. See also 5:2772–2773 and 6:4002–4004.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1166. See also 3:1240–1241.

earlier.<sup>362</sup> Quṭb regarded verses 1–4 of *Sūra* 112 (*al-Ikhlās*) as being particularly relevant to the doctrinal concept since it concentrated on proclaiming the Oneness (*tawḥīd*) of God in His existence (*wujūdhu*) and His actions (*afʿāluhu*). A deep understanding of and a firm belief in the doctrinal concept of Islam provided a strong force for people to restrain themselves from indulging in wrongdoing. They felt free to do as they wished so long as their deeds did not contradict Islamic principles and believed that nothing could be harmful unless by the Will of God.<sup>363</sup>

In Quṭb's opinion, people generally agreed, irrespective of their religious belief, that God alone created everything in this universe. The question then arose: whose laws were to be followed in human society, those of God or those of humans? Quṭb now realized that the *shirk* of the Arabs of the *jāhiliyya* (before Islam) and that of the Pharaoh were mainly due to their rejection of the sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*) of God Who laid down laws for humankind to follow.<sup>364</sup> Therefore rejection of the *ḥākimiyya* of God meant the rejection of His divinity (*ulūhiyya*) of God because God's *ḥākimiyya*, in Quṭb's view, was among the characteristics of his *ulūhiyya*, as noted earlier in this chapter.

When humans could free themselves from these feelings of servitude and submission to any of God's servants, they found that they were no longer impeded by any obstacles between them and God. They no longer had doubts in their hearts about their actions, for they knew that no one could cause harm unless by the Will of God. Their consciences would impel them to do good deeds and prevent them from committing any wrongdoing, because they were aware of the presence of God Who was All-Knowing and All-Seeing.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 3:1448–1449. Chapter Five of this study discusses the form of obedience to the ruler according to the basic principles of the Islamic political system.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:4003–4004.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:492; and 3:1353.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:4003.

From Quṭb's understanding of the freedom of human conscience from those in authority, it seems that his calling for such a liberation was revolutionary. This can be seen from several statements in which he clearly indicated his endeavour to bring about the Islamic revolution to change the current condition of Muslim society. For example:

The call of Islam to the oneness of God and a submission to Him alone is not a verbal question nor a merely theological doctrine like that of other religious beliefs. In fact, it is a call for a social revolution aimed at exterminating those trying to ascend the highest throne of the divinity, and enslave other people with their various forms of tricks and wiles.<sup>366</sup>

It [Islam] is a comprehensive system that seeks to abolish all false and unjust systems in the world and to replace them with a sound and moderate system which looks after all human welfare better than that of other systems. Under the system the individual will find himself safe and in peace from forms of tyranny and evil deeds.<sup>367</sup>

Here, Quṭb's revolutionary ideology seems to have been engendered by the promotion of a superior value system based on a belief in the divinity of God. Every Muslim was to be convinced that it was only the *sharīʿa* of God, that they needed to follow, since it was superior to the man-made systems known to the modern age. Muslims who understood this concept would be protected from becoming victims of those with superior power. This revolution, however, necessitated several processes and stages to bring about change in every aspect of human society.

Commenting on Quṭb's emphasis on the freedom of human conscience from submission to any but God alone, Haddad, for instance, believed that it was a call "to renounce defeatism and the feelings of subservience, irrelevance and inferiority which appear to be the by-products of European colonialism."<sup>368</sup> Furthermore, this

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<sup>366</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 3:1448.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:1449.

<sup>368</sup> Y.Y. Haddad, "The Qur'anic Justification for an Islamic Revolution: The View of Sayyid Quṭb," *The Middle East Journal* (1983): 37:20.

Islamic revolution in which Quṭb calls for by urgency and necessity, “provides liberation from bondage to all alien ideologies, thus eliminating the feeling of subservience to others.”<sup>369</sup> However, such a revolution:

involves the transformation of individuals through commitment. Together, these individuals form the righteous *jamāʿa* (body of believers) who become the vehicle of redemption for the society. They seek through *daʿwa* to alert the others of imminent dangers from hateful enemies that lurk scheming the destruction of society. They have absolute assurance of the truth of their mission and conviction of the justice of their cause, they are unwilling to be open to any alien ideas. The Qurʾān is their guide.<sup>370</sup>

Freedom of human conscience in Quṭb’s view, also included its freedom from being influenced by materialism. According to Quṭb, the expansion and the advancement of human life and civilization also caused people to overrate materialistic values. As a result individuals felt inferior to other people who had wealth and financial power in society. Therefore they felt disinclined to play an active part in public achievement because they believed that they had nothing of worth to offer and improve their position in society. This trend, Quṭb maintained, would only weaken society itself, since wealth had become the measure of an individual’s pride and respect in the public eye instead of good deeds and pity. In discussing the value of wealth and other worldly pleasures in the sight of God, he quoted from the Qurʾān as follows:

Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of this world. But the good righteous deeds, that last, are better with your Lord for rewards and better in respect of hope.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Haddad, “The Qurʾanic Justification,” 28.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Qurʾān, 18:46.



Quṭb held the view that there was no prohibition in Islam for individual Muslims to earn wealth and enjoy other worldly pleasures. However, these pleasure should be confined to the limits permitted by the *sharīʿa* so that they would not control the human mind and lead people astray. Therefore, Islam declared that only good deeds and pity were the best and most valuable investment in the sight of God, not the wealth that people sought.<sup>372</sup>

According to Quṭb, worldly pleasures such as wealth, children, women and profitable business were created by God to test people's faith (*īmān*) in Him. They were not created merely for enjoyment but to be sought and used in attaining God's pleasure and His blessings.<sup>373</sup> In his argument, Quṭb referred to verse 131 of *Sūra* 20 (*Tāhā*), which provided an important reminder for Muslims:

And strain not your eyes in longing for the things We have given for enjoyment to various groups of them (polytheists and disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah), the splendour of the life of this world, that We may test them thereby. But the provision (good reward in the hereafter) of your Lord is better and more lasting.

Quṭb interpreted this verse to mean that only God's blessings and His pleasure were the good reward for people in this world, since it was the permanent and best provision in the Hereafter. It was not a man's wealth, his children and his beloved women that would be brought together with him at the judgment before God, but his good deeds that arose from within his soul. Quṭb likened the temporary pleasures of this world to plants, producing attractive flowers which would eventually wither, despite their beauty (*wurā'*) and embellishment (*zawwāq*).<sup>374</sup>

Quṭb also interpreted the above verse to mean that Islam did not deny the right of people to enjoy the bounty (*niʿma*) from God, since such enjoyment might

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<sup>372</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 4:2272.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:2357.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

strengthen their belief in Him. What Islam sought to achieve in human life was to liberate the human conscience from devoting one's life wholly to wealth or other worldly pleasures which would finally lead one to ignore religious teachings. Quṭb stated:

God has created pleasantness of life so that people can take benefit from it and they can work hard on this earth to achieve and ensure such pleasantness (in their lives). Thus life will develop and be brought up to date and the vicegerency of humankind on this earth will therefore be realized. Such things however (should be available to people on the condition that) their intention (*wijhatuhum*) in enjoying this wealth is for the hereafter (*al-ākhirah*) and that they do not deviate from its way and become completely obsessed with the wealth so that they lose all sense of the responsibility that goes with it. The wealth in this case is one sort (*lawnun*) of the various tokens of appreciation from the Giver (*al-Mun'im*).<sup>375</sup>

Quṭb realized that the limits set by Islam on the earning of wealth was to ensure that people would not indulge in the practice of usury and other forms of economic transactions that exploited other people. He cited the story of Korah (Qārūn) as the best example of how he (Qārūn) has immersed himself in worldly pleasure, which finally led him to deviate from the path of God. The Qur'ān described the story as follows:

Verily, Qārūn (Korah) was of Mūsā's (Moses) people, but he behaved arrogantly towards them. And We gave him of the treasures, that of which the keys would have been a burden to a body of strong men. Remember when his people said to him: "Do not exult (with riches, being ungrateful to Allah). Verily Allah likes not those who exult (with riches, being ungrateful to Allah)."<sup>376</sup>

In another verse the Qur'ān described Qārūn's response to his people's advice:

He said: "This has been given to me only because of the knowledge I possess." Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him generations,

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<sup>375</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 5:2711.

<sup>376</sup> Qur'ān, 28:76.

men who were stronger than him in might and greater in the amount (of riches) they had collected?<sup>377</sup>

Quṭb interpreted these two verses to mean that Qārūn's disbelief was not because of his rejection of the *ulūhiyya* of God, but because of his arrogance with his wealth, which led him to say: "this has been given to me only because of the knowledge I possess." He understood that he was free to spend the money as he liked without being bound by God's laws.<sup>378</sup>

Qārūn's story also described how those who had a constant belief in God and followed His *manhaj* could avoid becoming obsessed with materialism:

So he (Korah) went forth before his people in his pomp. Those who were desirous of the life of the world, said: "Ah, would that we had the like of what Qārūn (Korah) has been given! Verily he is the owner of a great fortune. But those who had been given (religious) knowledge said: 'Woe to you! The Reward of Allah (in the hereafter) is better for those who believe and do righteous good deeds.'<sup>379</sup>

It seems, therefore, that Quṭb's emphasis on the freedom of human conscience was his attempt to raise the Muslims' consciousness about their role in life and not to be victims of those who used their wealth and power only to exploit and oppress others. Quṭb believed that once human honour and self-respect could be restored to their proper place and when the slavery of man by man no longer existed in human society, social justice based on equality between all human-beings could be established in human life in general and Muslim society in particular.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Qur'ān, 28:78.

<sup>378</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 5:2714.

<sup>379</sup> Qur'ān, 28:79–80.

<sup>380</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 3:1449.

#### 4.4.2 Human Equality

As already noted in Quṭb's view of the freedom of human conscience, human equality existed only in a society whose members considered all servants of God to be equal and no one to be superior to another except in good deeds and piety. Therefore, it was necessary to establish such equality in the practicality of daily life.

According to Quṭb, equality in Islam meant the equality of rights and freedom under the *sharīʿa* law. There could be no noble blood nor despised people, since all humankind was created in the same way from dust and *nutfā* (male semen and discharged female ovum, that is, Adam's offspring).<sup>381</sup> There could be no discrimination between men and women since all had the same rights and responsibilities under the *sharīʿa* of God. Arguing the concept of human equality as a religious duty, Quṭb cited several verses of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's *ahādīth*. Verse 1 of *Sūra* 4 (*al-Nisā'*), for instance, states:

O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and women; and fear Allah through Whom you demand (your mutual rights), and (reverence) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allah is ever an All-Watcher over you.

Quṭb interpreted this verse to mean that the origins of humankind were the same parents (Adam and Eve) and family. If people properly understood the implication of the verse in their lives, there should not exist the so-called class struggle and the division of individuals into different colours and races.<sup>382</sup> The verse also corrected the misinterpretation of the role of women in society, who had been regarded as useless and had become the cause of calamity and malice in the family. In reality,

<sup>381</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 5:2932. On Qur'ān's repetition about the nature of the creation of humankind, see also Qur'ān, 77: 20–23; 86:5–7; and 35:12.

<sup>382</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:574.



women were created to be men's partners in life so that the relationship between both parties would extend to form a family and from the family would evolve a society.<sup>383</sup>

The Qur'ān further explained the nature of the creation of humankind into male and female, into nations and tribes, so that they could co-operate with and befriend one another:

O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has *al-taqwā* [i.e. he is one of the *muttaqūn* (the pious)]. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.<sup>384</sup>

Quṭb cited this verse to argue that it was the Creator of humankind who called upon people to co-operate and unite. Thus there was no reason for people to ignore this divine call, for differences in the colour of skin, languages and tribes should not be the basis of dispute. Such differences were purposely created by God so that people would come together to co-operate with and to know one another in faith and humanity. Moreover, it was not the sex, language, country of origin, and nationality that were taken into consideration in God's measurement (*ḥisāb Allah*). Indeed, there was only one measurement of the value of human's kindness: "the most honourable among you with Allah is that (believer) who has *al-taqwā* (fear of God)."<sup>385</sup> Quṭb also cited the Prophet's *ḥadīth*, narrated by Muslim, which stressed the equality of all human beings: "You are all the progeny of Adam, and Adam himself was of earth."<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:574–575.

<sup>384</sup> Qur'ān, 49:13.

<sup>385</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3348.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid. On another occasion the Prophet said: "People are as equal as the teeth of a comb; there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab except by virtue of piety." See Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Abū Fāris, *al-Niẓām al-Siyāsī fi 'l-Islām* (Amman: Dār al-Furqān, 1989), 41.

In Quṭb's view, Islam had guaranteed a complete equality between the sexes, particularly regarding religious duties, rights in wealth, ect. Therefore, no discrimination or preference was allowed in this regard, except in certain circumstances relating to natural and recognized capacities, skill or responsibilities, which did not affect the essential nature of the human situation of the two sexes. According to the Qur'ān verse 7 *Sūra 4 (al-Nisā')* which says, "Men shall have a portion of what their parents and their near relatives leave; and women shall have a portion of what their parents and their near relatives leave", Quṭb argued that women, like men were given a right to wealth on the basis of their status as human beings, not because of the contribution both made to society. In *jāhiliyya* society, this just distribution of wealth did not exist because one's right to wealth was based on one's contribution to and merit in society, such as on the battlefield and in production.<sup>387</sup>

One could ask if this equality could lead to inequality in inheritance, for the verse 11 of *Sūra 4 (al-Nisā')* states, "Allah commands you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females." Quṭb argued that the preference given to the man, who received double the share of the woman's inheritance, was because of the financial responsibility he had to bear in life to support and look after his family. The woman, however, was not charged with this responsibility because she would receive financial support from her husband when she married. If she remained single, it would be the responsibility of her male relatives to support her.<sup>388</sup> The basic principle of equality in Islam, Quṭb contended, was based on God's plan (*al-manhaj al-rabbānī*) that "considered the status of human beings first, since it was a fundamental value that united them in all matters! Then it looked into the reality of human's responsibilities in the family and society."<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:588.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 1:591.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid., 1:588.

To maintain equality and justice between both men and women, Quṭb asserted that Islam had provided guidelines for the functions and tasks which both sexes have to take on in life according to their mental and physical capabilities. This meant that the function of a woman, say, in the supervision of the family, bearing and rearing children and pregnancy, was not because she was inferior or superior, but because she was more suited temperamentally, psychologically and physically to perform that role. As Quṭb stated:

God has created humankind as male and female (*dhakaran wa unthā*), partners (*zawjayn*) on the whole foundation (*al-qāʿida al-kulliyya*) of establishing this universe, and He has provided for women roles, among which are that she conceive a pregnancy, deliver a (baby), breast feed and take care of the baby (as a result of her relationship with her husband)...in fact it is an important task and risky, and it is not easy, in that it requires great physical and mental preparation to fit her for the physical and mental rearing of children. Therefore, it is just for the man to deal with the affairs of society and manage the woman's affairs so that she can devote more attention to her task (described earlier), without at the same time being burdened with supporting herself and her child.<sup>390</sup>

Human equality in Islam also demanded the assurance of an individual's rights, respect and honour as a human being, irrespective of race, tribe, language and faith. This, again, returns to the basis of humankind as a whole who belongs to Adam and comes from dust. If Adam was honoured, then his children were all equal in every respect. Quṭb believed that it was because of the honour and nobility of humankind that Islam prohibited insulting or slandering one another, since every individual had his or her own sancity, which should not be violated by others. Citing verse 12 of *Sūra* 49 (*al-Ḥujarāt*) which states: "Do not spy into one another's affairs, and do not indulge in backbiting against one another", Quṭb argued that it "educates people in how to purify their feelings and consciences in a wonderful and effective way."<sup>391</sup> For a peaceful and harmonious society cannot be achieved if its members

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<sup>390</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:650.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:3345.

still slander one another. This is because every person has his or her own honour and respect that should not be violated in any way.<sup>392</sup>

To maintain the principle of human equality, Islam also demanded that Muslims not be suspicious of other members of society, Muslim or non-Muslim. “Indeed, some types of suspicion are sinful.”<sup>393</sup> According to Quṭb, the prohibition in this verse was intended to correct the Muslims’ minds and their perceptions of or feelings towards other members of society. They should not make suspicion the basis of their judgement of others, since most suspicions were not always true. Citing the Prophet’s *ḥadīth* which said, “if you are suspicious (of someone), do not try to verify it”, Quṭb argued: “Humans will always be regarded as innocent; their rights, freedom and respect are protected until it is proved that they have committed sins. It is not enough (merely) to suspect them.”<sup>394</sup>

According to Quṭb, the above Islamic principles of human equality could not be found in other systems known to humankind in this modern age. He condemned so-called human freedom under the name of democracy, which had become the pride of the modern generation to bring justice and equality. Islam, Quṭb contended, established the concept of equality by combining the fear of God (*al-taqwā*) and the purification of human souls from all the evil desires described above. In fact these principles were the basis of all other Islamic principles regarding human society. Therefore they needed to be emphasized before discussing the implementation of the *sharīʿa* law and so on, because such a combination provided the individual with a sense of love and mercy towards other people.<sup>395</sup>

Therefore equality in Islam apparently sought to assure an individual’s right, honour and freedom in society. No one would be allowed to violate another’s

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<sup>392</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3346.

<sup>393</sup> Qur’ān, 49:12.

<sup>394</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3345.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:3345–3347.



sanctity, since all human beings were originally equal, coming from the single soul (*nafsun waḥīda*) irrespective of their colour, race or even sex. In the sight of God, they distinguished only by their good deeds and piety. Quṭb strongly emphasized these two important elements for he believed that they inspired mutual respect and positive feelings in society and made people aware of their personal and inviolable dignity.

#### 4.4.3 Social Solidarity

Any discussion on social justice is incomplete without dealing with the co-operation between individuals and society to achieve peace and harmony. Therefore, Islam laid certain responsibilities on individuals and society of mutual social care or social solidarity (*al-takāful al-ijtimāʿī*), the principles of which were mercy, love and unselfishness.

In general, modern Muslim scholars viewed social solidarity as a social concept because it required co-operation between all members of society, whether individuals, groups, rulers or the ruled. All members were responsible for helping one another to promote the common welfare and prosperity of their society irrespective of their differences in sex, class and so on.<sup>396</sup>

According to Quṭb, social solidarity was not limited to the relationship and co-operation between individuals and society. Rather, it embraced all aspects of human social life, including that of responsibility between the individual and his or her personal conscience, between the individual and his or her family, between the individual and other members of the community and between the nation (*umma*) and other nations. Only those inspired by faith (*īmān*) could appreciate the significance of this mutual social responsibility of helping their fellow men and women, which led

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<sup>396</sup> See for instance ʿAbd Allāh Nāṣih ʿUlwān, *al-Takāful al-Ijtimāʿī fī l-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 1983), 15–16. See also, Muḥammad Abū Zahra, *al-Takāful al-Ijtimāʿī fī l-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1991), 7. See also Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in Focus* (Jedda: Al Madina Printing & Publication, 1987), 123–124.

to social justice.<sup>397</sup> That is why the Qur'ān, while stressing the nature of mutual social responsibility, always began with "those who believe..." (*alladhīna āmanū*) to highlight how good moral conduct was characteristic of Muslim believers.<sup>398</sup>

The role of faith (*īmān*) also includes controlling the natural instinct (*al-muyūl al-fītriyya*) of the human soul so that it will respond in accordance with the *Sharī'a* of God. Quṭb's example of the division of wealth according to the Islamic law of inheritance clearly showed how Islam took into particular consideration human natural instincts. Feelings of love and compassion for his own family, for instance, would make a father put maximum effort into his work, since he knew that the fruit of his efforts would continue to benefit his children and grandchildren.<sup>399</sup>

On the other hand, a natural instinct which was not imbued with faith (*īmān*) and a feeling of direct contact with God would be easily defeated and influenced by evil desire (*al-hawā*). Faith was the only means of resistance. If people could protect their souls from evil desires, they would be regarded as successful in life. If they failed, that is, the evil desire managed to take control of their thoughts and everyday actions, they would be among those who became lost on their way to God. As the Qur'ān stated: "Whosoever is guided, is only guided to his own gain, and whosoever goes astray, it is only to his own loss: thou art not a guardian over them."<sup>400</sup>

The responsibility of individuals towards themselves was to control and guide their souls and call them to account when they went astray. According to Quṭb, this was the first task for true believer, before he tried to guide members of their families and society to the path of God.<sup>401</sup> Quṭb described this as a huge task in human life,

<sup>397</sup> Quṭb's discussion on the role of faith as a driving force in influencing individual character toward a goodness and kindness to other fellow men can be seen in the followings: Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:442–445; 2:773–775; 6:3964–3970; and 5:2822–2823.

<sup>398</sup> See for instance Qur'ān, 1:177; 49:10; 5:2; and 3:102–103.

<sup>399</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:587.

<sup>400</sup> Qur'ān, 39:41

<sup>401</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 6:3619.

since people were struggling against the enemy (evil desire) within their own bodies. There was no other force driving people to destruction with its strong impulse towards tyranny and wrongdoing.<sup>402</sup>

Islam is a religion that takes account of all aspects of human life, including personal, social, economic and political relationships between people. It legislates that such relationships are to be conducted in accordance with God's command. In this regard, Islam does not allow its members to live in isolation from other people. A Muslim who believes in God and in what has been sent down through His Prophet is required to communicate with the people around him. He has to be sensitive to what happens to other members of his society. According to Quṭb, before an individual Muslim looked at the outside world, he had to look first into his own family, because the family itself constituted the foundation of society as a whole and became the first preparation for a man before taking a part in the outside world.<sup>403</sup>

A man's responsibility towards his family, as described earlier, meant that he must protect all his family members from deviating from God's path. Quṭb quoted verse 6 of *Sūra* 66 (*al-Taḥrīm*) saying that, "O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones."<sup>404</sup> Though the verse specifically referred to men as the heads of families who were responsible for their families' welfare, Quṭb maintained that women also had a significant role in assisting their husbands towards creating a family life based on Islamic principles. Quṭb realized that choosing a good partner in life was also vital, because it would help towards in educating members of the family onto the path to God, since both spouses already knew their role and task in family life.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:776–777.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 6:3619. See also 2:650.

<sup>404</sup> Qur'ān, 66:6.

<sup>405</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3619.

Quṭb also pointed out that family harmony could be established when both the husband and wife were prepared to help each other and bear any marital responsibility. This co-operation should, however, be based on a just distribution of tasks so that both husband and wife could perform their responsibilities according to their capacities as created by God. It is therefore appropriate for the woman, who was biologically created with feelings of love and compassion, to look after the children and educate them to be good Muslims. The man, who was biologically created by God with strength and toughness, was therefore suited to look after his wife and children and administer the family's life as a whole.<sup>406</sup>

Mutual responsibility between the individual and his family also includes a kind relationship between children and parents. In the following verse, the Qur'ān is clearly ordering a Muslim to show respect to his parents:

And to be good to parents, whether one or both of them attains old age with thee: say not to them "Fie", nor chide them, but speak to them respectful words, and lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them, as they raised me up when I was little."<sup>407</sup>

Interpreting this verse, Quṭb again stressed that treating parents with respect indicated a person's faith in God. This was because once faith occupied the heart, it must be followed by social and individual responsibilities that needed to be upheld by the believer, among which was respect for parents.<sup>408</sup> Moreover, showing respect for parents was a continuum of family life, for the children were repaying the sacrifice made by their parents in rearing them. It was not the repayment of wealth or money to the parents that Islam looked for, but love, mercy and compassion.

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<sup>406</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:650–651.

<sup>407</sup> Qur'ān, 17:23–24.

<sup>408</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 4:2221.



Quṭb realized that respect for parents should begin when the children were still young age. Parents should first implant in their children the seeds of faith (*īmān*) and show their compassion and love for them. By so doing, the children would grow up in a harmonious environment based on a strong belief in God. They would benefit from their parents' righteousness and inherit it in turn. Quṭb's view of modern society, however, was that modern life itself made people look and think ahead and not backwards. In family life, people preferred to focus on the welfare of their wives and children instead of looking after their own parents, thus ignoring the latter. Therefore, it was only with a proper religious education implanted in children's minds that the relationship between children and parents could be strengthened. For children to become good Muslims, Quṭb maintained, benefited not only the parents but also the whole of society and generations to come.<sup>409</sup>

Here one can see how Quṭb linked the family's development with that of the community. In his view, a good family was not one living in isolation from the outside world but one that contributed to producing a good human personality (*al-ʿunṣur al-insānī*), which became one of the community's members.<sup>410</sup>

Turning to solidarity between individuals and Muslim society, Quṭb linked its existence to a body. If one member were afflicted, the rest of the members also suffered. To support this point, he cited the Prophet: "In their mutual love, compassion and sympathy, the believers are like the body: if one member suffers the rest of the body responds with it in sleeplessness and fever."<sup>411</sup>

The co-operation and solidarity among Muslims, whom the Qur'ān described as "brothers" (*ikhwān* or *ikhwah*),<sup>412</sup> derived from a feeling within the soul that one was walking along the path to God (*sunnat Allah*). Therefore, one believed that

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<sup>409</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 4:2221.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 2:650.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 1:209.

<sup>412</sup> See the Qur'ān, 49:10.

whatever good deed one was doing was for the sake of God and not for other worldly rewards.<sup>413</sup> This was the criterion that distinguished Muslims from unbelievers, since the first was founded on *‘aqīda*, which assembled all Muslims under one belief, irrespective of their race, culture and language, whereas the unbelievers had no divine elements in a true sense.<sup>414</sup>

Muslims’ responsibility towards other members of society also included showing respect for them and avoiding negative attitudes such as suspecting and slandering other people. These attitudes, besides lowering a person’s integrity and respect, also destroyed the whole of society itself since its members no longer felt mutual trust and respect. That is why Islam, according to Quṭb, prohibited such attitudes, so that a life based on trust and respect could be established among the members of a Muslim community.<sup>415</sup>

Another principle applicable to Muslim life and responsibility in society concerned their position on receiving news from a liar (*fāsiq*). They were required to verify the news carefully so that they would not harm others in ignorance.<sup>416</sup> Verse 6 of *Sūra* 49 (*al-Ḥujarāt*) clearly reminds Muslim:

O you who believe! If a *fāsiq* (liar) comes to you with any news, verify it, lest you should harm people in ignorance, and afterwards you regret what you have done.

Quṭb contended that the verse referred mainly to two groups of Muslims: those in authority and all Muslim believers. Those in authority should clearly verify news coming from the *fāsiq* because any wrong judgement they made on its basis would seriously undermine their leadership and the community as a whole, since it

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<sup>413</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:208.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid., 1:209.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid., 6:3345.

<sup>416</sup> Qur’ān, 49:6.

concerned the implementation of the *sharīʿa* law which sought to establish justice in human society. If the judgement were wrong, their credibility would be lost in the eyes of the public.<sup>417</sup> Quṭb understood the verse to show the position of Muslims in such a situation and advise the appropriate response. Once unreliable news spread in society, it created doubt among everyone and their lives based on trust would collapse. That was why the word *fāsiq* is mentioned in the verse to differentiate its attributes from those of Muslim believers who enjoyed mutual trust.<sup>418</sup>

Co-operation and solidarity in the Muslim community includes the prevention of all forms of evil. Therefore, all its members, whether individuals or a group, are required to look after the welfare of fellow Muslims and bring them back to the right path if they have deviated from the truth. In fact, there is a saying of the Prophet which asks individual Muslims to act responsibly upon seeing wrongdoing:

Whoever among you sees any wrong-doing, let him change it with his hand;  
if he cannot do that, let him change it with his tongue; if he cannot do that;  
let him change it with his heart; and that shows the weakest faith.

Citing this *hadīth*, Quṭb contended that enjoining good and forbidding evil doing were attributes of the Muslim *umma*. If none of its members took on this responsibility, the so called *umma Muslima* (Muslim community) would no longer exist in a real sense (*wujūdān haqīqiyyan*).<sup>419</sup> Quṭb saw that among the problems facing the Muslim *umma* of the modern age was that immorality and wrongdoing

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<sup>417</sup> Chapter Five of this study discusses the position of the Muslim ruler or *imām* with regard to the implementation of the *sharīʿa* law.

<sup>418</sup> In general, most of the exegetes, among them, Ibn Kathīr, al-Ṭabarī and Qurṭubī, have the view that the verse was revealed regarding an occasion when someone called al-Walīd bin ʿUqba was sent by the Prophet to Bani Mustalaq to convince them of the truth of Islam and they accepted it. However, in returning to the Prophet, al-Walīd said that they (Bani Mustalaq) were preparing to fight the Prophet. Knowing the situation, the Prophet sent Khalīd al-Walīd to the tribe to get more information on what was happening and asked him not to be rush to attack them but to keep observing the real situation. Khalīd al-Walīd then sent his spy to investigate the truth and finally realized that they (Bani Mustalaq) accepted Islam and kept constant to its teachings. The Prophet was then informed of the real situation which contradicted what he had been told by al-Walīd earlier. See Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3340–3341.

<sup>419</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:448.



were personal matters and no one had the right to interfere. Furthermore, history showed that the religious scholars' silence regarding wrongdoing of some of the people was among the reasons for the destruction of the children of Israel: their state passed away and their cultural identity disappeared. In describing the phenomenon, Quṭb quoted the Prophet's tradition, narrated by Ibn Mas'ūd:<sup>420</sup>

“When the children of Israel fell into disobedience, their scholars (*‘ulamā*) forbade them but they did not stop, so they sat with them and ate and drank with them (in their session), and God set them against each other and cursed them by the tongue of Dāwūd, Sulayman and Jesus the son of Maryam....”(then the Prophet sat and rested his weight and said) “No, by Him in whose hand my soul is, not until they bend themselves to the truth.”<sup>421</sup>

It seems that Quṭb's personal ordeal together with that of other Ikhwān members and his experience of living under the Nasserite regime very much influenced his emphasis on this matter. Clearly, his experience of torture and oppression received little response from the public, many of whom kept silent and were afraid to react against wrongdoing on the part of the government. As Khālidī writes, Quṭb's prison experience enabled him to see the real situation of his fellow Muslims in Egypt at that time. Many questions revolved in his mind:

how can the enemy be united among them, irrespective of their class differences, in their efforts to combat the Islamic movement? Why were their officers so faithful in implementing the orders of their masters? Why did they repudiate sincere and honest people? Why did the masses surrender their innocent children to work with their enemy and let them be comrades with those inhumane (people)? And why did they then keep silent about their wrongdoing, such as oppressing and torturing (fellow men)?<sup>422</sup>

<sup>420</sup> His full name was ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd. He was one of the Prophet's companions who received a unique training in the household of the Prophet. He was under the guidance of the Prophet, adopted the latter's manner and followed his every trait until it was said of him, “He was the closest to the Prophet in character.”

<sup>421</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:448

<sup>422</sup> Khālidī, *al-Manhaj al-Harakī*, 28. See also Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:949.



Besides making an effort to end wrongdoing, it is also the community's responsibility to look after the welfare of those members who are weak among its members and to protect them, as the Qur'ān states:

And what is wrong with you that you fight not in the Cause of Allah, and for those weak, ill-treated and oppressed among men, women, and children, whose cry is: "Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors, and raise for us from You one who will protect, and raise for us from You one who will help."<sup>423</sup>

Interpreting this verse, Quṭb saw that the protection given to these people was not based merely on family ties or blood relationship. More importantly, it was based on a similar faith and belief (*‘aqīda*) shared by both parties, since faith was the most valuable asset in a Muslim's life, compared with other tribulations (financial difficulties, and lose of honour, self and land).<sup>424</sup>

The protection of children, the weak and the sick ill person among men and women also meant providing financial support and general welfare. If orphans had no one to act as their guardians, for instance, then the community as a whole had to take responsibility for looking after them and their property until they reached the age of discretion, so no one would take advantage of their vulnerability. This property, however, was to be returned to the orphans once they reached the age of discretion (*bulūgh*).<sup>425</sup> Such protection given by Islam to these people, Quṭb contended, was not found in the *jāhiliyya* society before the coming of Islam. In those days, the orphans, women and children had no place in the eyes of the *jāhiliyya* community at a whole, since they did not make any contribution to the society such as taking part in battle, etc., and had nothing to be proud of. Islam, however, enabled

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<sup>423</sup> Qur'ān, 4:75.

<sup>424</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:708.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid., 1:586.

and permitted them to have a right to the wealth left by their parents and close family.<sup>426</sup>

The community's responsibility to these people was not limited to protecting their wealth. If they were poor, it was the community's responsibility to pay them the *zakāt*.<sup>427</sup> Quṭb maintained that the state, which is discussed in Chapter Five, had an important role to play to ensure the effective management of *zakāt* according to the *sharīʿa* law.<sup>428</sup>

One can see here how Islam has recognized the concept of solidarity in the lives of Muslims by using all possible means to maintain stability and peace for all the community's members. For this reason, any attempt to destroy this solidarity by wrongdoing is prohibited and there is a severe punishment for those who commit these social crimes. The penalty for killing or wounding, for instance, has been laid down as an exact equivalent, as the Qur'ān states: "free man for free man, slave for slave, female for female."<sup>429</sup> A similar principle applies to theft, which deserves a severe punishment since it is a crime against property. "As for the thief, man or woman, cut their hands as a recompense for what they have accumulated; a chastisement from Allah."<sup>430</sup>

Interpreting these verses, Quṭb contended that Islam sought to improve the personal character of individual Muslims by training their consciences to fear God and by emphasizing to them the means of earning wealth by working, not by stealing from and killing their fellow men and women. If they were experiencing financial difficulties and needed income support, there was the law which gave the poor and

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<sup>426</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:586.

<sup>427</sup> A detailed explanation of *zakāt* and those eligible for receiving it is discussed in wealth and social equity in Chapter Five.

<sup>428</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:587.

<sup>429</sup> Qur'ān, 2:178.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:38.

needy the right to the wealth of the rich through *zakāt* and other voluntary donations. Therefore, there was no reason for anyone to choose stealing and killing to satisfy his personal desires in this life. Thus a severe punishment for these people was appropriate, according to their evil doings.<sup>431</sup>

As a whole we found that Quṭb's discussion on the concept of social solidarity in Islam saw faith (*īmān*) as the most important element in establishing feelings of love and mercy in the human conscience towards other members of the community. This is because from faith generates good conduct and good deeds, since it is derived from a clear perception of life, and the purpose of one's existence in this world is to submit all one's life to God and follow His *manhaj*.<sup>432</sup> In addition, a firm faith (*īmān thābit*) in God acts as a means for individuals to differentiate between good and evil, since the community alone could not stand against widespread wrongdoing, which has wrought destruction in some areas.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:164 and 2:883.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 1:447–448.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 1:447.

## Chapter Five

### The practical dimension of social justice in Islam

#### 5.1 Introduction

After discussing the doctrine upon which all Islamic principles of life are based, including the *ulūhiyya* of God, His *rubūbiyya* and *‘ubūdiyya muṭlaqa* (total obedience) to God, this study now focuses on the practical application of these concepts to human society. This includes the elements of the Islamic political system, the management of wealth and its role in achieving social equity, and, finally, the applications of Islam in regard to human relations. The study also particularly examine how Quṭb’s notion of the Islamic system of government and its economic policy were intended to solve the current social and economic disparities and create justice in human society. As he stated in *al-‘Adāla*, for example:

every discussion of social justice in Islam must accompany a discussion of government policy in Islam (*siyāsat al-ḥukm fī’l-Islām*), commensurate with the principle (*qā‘ida*) which we have just mentioned in a discussion of the nature of social justice.<sup>434</sup>

A similar emphasis was made by the author in *Zilāl*. Quṭb considered it crucial for people to live peacefully and to protect their wealth and right of private ownership from abuse and invasion without their consent. Hence, the implementation of the *sharī‘a* law was one of Quṭb’s priorities, along with that of establishing a Muslim community (*jamā‘at al-Muslim*). He further believed that the *sharī‘a* laws (*al-aḥkām al-shar‘iyya*) would be effective only in an environment (*bī’a*) where there was an *imām* or *khalīfa* who applied the law legitimately along with the governed, who accepted its application to their social and economic affairs. That is why he used terms like *Dār al-Islām*, *Dār al-Ḥarb* and *Dawla Islāmiyya*, which are explained below.

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<sup>434</sup> Quṭb, *al-‘Adāla*, 89.



An analysis of recent studies of Quṭb's ideas suggests that little specific research had been done into Quṭb's political and economic background as elaborated in *Ẓilāl*. Mousalli, for instance, in his book, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Quṭb*, mentioned interesting questions of the nature of and grounds for political obligation and the establishment of an Islamic state. The author, however, paid little attention to the characteristics of an Islamic political system, which constitutes an important element of Islamic government. Instead, he limited his discussion to the *sharīʿa* and *ḥākimiyya* as bases of Quṭb's political theory.<sup>435</sup>

Mahdī Faḍlullah also devoted a chapter to Quṭb's political thought. The discussion, however, was more of a historical background to Quṭb's political development. Names like al-Afghānī, ʿAbduh, Rashīd Riḍā and al-Bannā were highlighted to indicate their political influences on Quṭb.<sup>436</sup> On questions of government, law, economy, and other aspects of politics, both Faḍlullah and Mousalli based their analysis mainly on Quṭb's writings: *al-ʿAdāla*, *Maʿrakat*, and *Maʿālim*. Only in a very few places do they quote Quṭb's statements from the *Ẓilāl*. Clearly those works, except *Maʿālim*, which was written after the *Ẓilāl*, represented Quṭb's Islamic orientation, which was still developing over a period of years, as already discussed in Chapter Two of this study. It was in *Ẓilāl* that Quṭb most fully elaborated his ideas and related them to their sacred source, as he saw it, in the Qurʾān. Moreover, Quṭb's long study of the Qurʾān, coupled with his experience of living under the Nasserite regime, made him mature enough to discuss political and economic issues, as required in Islamic teachings.

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<sup>435</sup> Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, 149–171.

<sup>436</sup> Mahdī Faḍl Allāh, *Maʿa Sayyid Quṭb fī Fikrihi al-Siyāsī waʾl-Dīnī* (Beirut: Muʾassasa al-Risāla, 1979), 81–92.

Nettler's article on Quṭb's political interpretation of the Qur'ān seems to have a good analysis about the author's political thought in *Ẓilāl*.<sup>437</sup> He focuses on Quṭb's Qur'anic commentary as a response to the challenge of secularism and the post-colonial disarray of Islamic institutions, and should be regarded as a starting-point for examining Quṭb's political theory in *Ẓilāl* itself. The discussion, however, is based mainly on Quṭb's thematic introduction to *Sūra 5 (al-Mā'ida)*, with some references to certain parts of the *Sūra*. This has been admitted by Nettler himself, when he notes that his study "might well even serve as a good general survey of Quṭb's entire religious-political Islamic outlook."<sup>438</sup> Moreover, Nettler views *Sūra 5 (al-Mā'ida)* as representing an important theme on political Islam as well as Quṭb's political discussion.

Therefore, the present study examines Quṭb's notion of a political system of Islam as described in *Ẓilāl*. This includes his view on the nature of the state, its characteristics, the role of the *imām* or *khalīfa* and the governed (*maḥkūm*), and the nature of *shūrā*. In addition, the study investigates Quṭb's notions of the management of wealth including private ownership in Islam, the institution of *zakāt* and the prohibition of usury (*ribā*).

## 5.2 The Political System of Islam

### 5.2.1 The necessity of the state

Before considering Quṭb's views on political life and the state in particular, it would be useful first to look at some views from modern and classical scholars regarding Islamic polity and leadership, to assess their importance from the Islamic perspective.

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<sup>437</sup> Ronald L. Nettler, "Guidelines for the Islamic community: Sayyid Quṭb's political interpretation of the Qur'ān," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1:2 (1996), 183–196.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

Imām al-Ghazālī (d.1111), for instance, noted the integral relationship between the *sharīʿa* and Islamic political life:

You must know that the *sharīʿa* is the foundation and the government is the guard. If something (that is, the government) has no foundation, it is bound to fall into ruins, and if something (that is, the *sharīʿa*) has no guard, it will be lost and destroyed.<sup>439</sup>

This unity of religion and politics was also advocated by Ḥasan al-Bannā (d.1949), when he stressed in many of his speeches the authentic nature of Islamic political ideology and the measurement of the Muslims' faith as reflected in the implementation of those two principles, besides other elements of the Islamic way of life. Al-Bannā stated:

Those who believe that the religion – or in other words, Islam – does not expound on politics (*al-siyāsa*) or that politics is excluded from its themes, have surely committed an outrage upon themselves and their knowledge (*ʿilmihī*) about this religion (Islam).<sup>440</sup>

Questions on the Islamic political system were also discussed and debated by scholars of the past. Many books were produced by them on such concepts as *khilāfa*, *imāma*, etc. Notwithstanding the variety of names and titles, these focused on the need for an Islamic state, including the role of *imām* in administering justice and providing security for all citizens, regardless of colour, race or belief. Among the well-known books are *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya* by al-Māwardī (d.1058) and *al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya fī Iṣlāḥ al-Rāʿī wa'l-Raʿiyya* by Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328). Al-Māwardī in his work *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya*, for example said:

<sup>439</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (Cairo: ʾIsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Shurakā'uhu, n.d.), 1:16.

<sup>440</sup> Jābir Rizq, *al-Dawla wa'l-Siyāsa fī Fikr Ḥasan al-Bannā* (Manṣūra: Dār al-Wafā' li'l-Ṭibā'a wa'l-Nashr, 1985), 82.

The institution of the imamate is prescribed to succeed prophethood as a means of protecting the *dīn* (religion) and of managing the affairs of this world...it is required by the *sharīʿa* and not by reason.<sup>441</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya, on the other hand, stressed that the Islamic community and the Islamic state complemented each other. For this reason, he concluded: "It is a duty to consider the exercise of power to be one of the forms of religion, to be one of the acts by which man draws near to God."<sup>442</sup>

There are also scholars among non-Muslims who accept the fact that Islam has established fundamental principles of state politics, whose application throughout the centuries has been based on the clear understanding of them, interpreting them and being bound by them. Bernard Lewis, for instance, states:

Islam was associated with power from the very beginning, from the first formative years of the Prophet and his immediate successors. This association between religion and power, community and polity, can already be seen in the Qurʾān itself and in the other early religious tenets on which Muslims base their beliefs.<sup>443</sup>

In the words of Von Grunebaum one can also perceive his view of the unity of the Islamic way of life, where religion has an important role in determining the social and political affairs of the Muslim community. Von Grunebaum notes:

The Companions of the Prophet were distinguished by the fact that they united religion, morals, strength and political ability. Their victory ushered in the best period of history, that of the rightly-guided Caliphs, with its perfect balance of religious and political, practical and spiritual aspirations and activities. Much for the benefit of mankind Islam began to exercise a growing influence on the direction in which mankind was moving. Consciously and unconsciously, the Islamic model formed views and attitudes in Christendom: standards of thought, law, the social order, and political organization were affected. In a sense, one could speak of a

<sup>441</sup> Abu'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985), 5.

<sup>442</sup> Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyya, *al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya fī Iṣlāḥ al-Rāʾī wa'l-Raʿiyya* (Alexandria: Dār al-Īmān, n.d.), 219.

<sup>443</sup> See Bernard Lewis, "The Return of Islam," in *Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Michael Curtis (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), 12.



universal movement towards Islam. The world would have been fortunate had this tendency continued.<sup>444</sup>

Doubtless to say that religion and politics are inseparable in the teachings of Islam since religious regulations, being related to the law and the administration of justice among the people according to God's command, could not be established without an authority to uphold God's commands and apply them to the reality of human life. This supports Ibn Taymiyya's statement:

Authority over the affairs of the people is the greatest religious duty. In fact religion cannot be established at all without this authority because Allah has prescribed as a duty the enjoining of good (*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf*), the prohibition of evil (*wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar*) and the support of the oppressed. In the same way, all that He has prescribed in terms of fighting for His sake, the establishment of justice and the enforcement of the penal code cannot be implemented without power and authority.<sup>445</sup>

Following Ibn Taymiyya's view, al-Mawdūdī states that the realization of the objectives of the *sharī'a* is simply impossible without the agency of the state and the power that it commands. In his view:

Any reform, which Islam wants to bring about, cannot be carried out merely by sermons. Political power is essential for their achievement; the struggle for obtaining control over the organs of the state when motivated by the urge to establish the religion and the Islamic *sharī'a* and to enforce the Islamic injunctions, is not only permissible but is positively desirable and as such obligatory.<sup>446</sup>

Although politics and religion are inseparable in the teachings of Islam – and the establishment of the first Islamic state in Medina by the Prophet (pbuh) confirmed this – there are Muslims who are still at the crossroads of political issues. They believe that Islam should not be associated with social and political affairs.

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<sup>444</sup> G. E. Von Grunebaum, *Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 184.

<sup>445</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Siyāsa al-Shar'īyya*, 218–219.

<sup>446</sup> Abū'l-A'ālā al-Mawdūdī, *The Islamic Law and Constitution* trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1980), 165.

This development is due to many reasons, among which are internal political factors within some Muslim countries which do not allow their people to do so or even to discuss the subject objectively and critically. There is also the rigidity affecting Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) which had closed the doors of *ijtihād*.<sup>447</sup> The third, and most important, is the tendency to imitate the West, which adheres to the principle of separation of church and state.<sup>448</sup>

In Egypt, a Muslim country influenced by Western politics, a tendency to separate religion and politics has been clearly apparent, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There have arisen some Muslim rulers there who have imitated Western ideology in their government, which is commonly perceived by the fundamentalist groups, the *Ikhwān* in particular, as a secular government. Consequently, the administration of the country was based on man-made law instead of the *sharīʿa* law.

Therefore, Quṭb's critical discussion on the need to establish an Islamic community (*al-mujtamaʿ al-Islāmī*), leading to the creation of a state, was seen to break the deadlock, based on the belief that power wielded according to the *sharīʿa* of God brought more modesty into politics and more attention to justice in human society. His personal experience of living in a society which tolerated oppression and exploitation of power by the authorities was seen to be clear evidence of why he later came to believe that only Islam could solve all these problems. That is why in many of his works terms like *jāhiliyya* society and *ẓulm* (tyrants) are used to describe conditions at the time.

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<sup>447</sup> It is individual reasoning on matters of law in particular. It consists in legislating on matters for which neither any explicit injunctions nor even precedents exist, subject, of course, to the general principles and precepts of the *sharīʿa*. See for details, Mawdūdī, *The Islamic law and Constitution*, 76–80.

<sup>448</sup> ʿĀrif Khalīl Abū ʿĪd, *Niẓām al-Ḥukm fī 'l-Islām* (Jordan: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1996), 9–14. See also ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Mutawallī, *al-Islām wa Uṣul al-Ḥukm* (Beirut: Maktaba al-Ḥayāh, 1966), 106–120.

### 5.2.2 Quṭb's notion of the state

In discussing Quṭb's notion of the state in Islam, one needs to examine first the meaning of religion (*al-dīn*) and Islam from Quṭb's point of view, since a clear understanding of these definitions would enable one to see the necessity of establishing an Islamic state.

According to Quṭb, *al-dīn* means true belief (*al-ʿitiqād al-ṣaḥīḥ*), obedience (*ṭāʿa*) and the derivation of all principles of life – such as what is permitted and what is forbidden – only from God, and governing one's life according to what God has revealed in the Qur'ān, without any distortion or alteration.<sup>449</sup> Thus all matters concerning doctrinal belief, obedience to God's commands including the lawful (*ḥalāl*) and the unlawful (*ḥarām*), and the organization of society and government are included under the rubric of religion.<sup>450</sup>

Elsewhere, Quṭb characterized religion as a way of life sent down by God to organize human affairs, and to guide people to a true path. It is not a mere emotional belief, cut off from the actual domain of human life, but the implementation of what God has revealed in the Qur'ān, including the enforcement of *ḥudūd*<sup>451</sup>, *taʿzīr*<sup>452</sup> etc., as laid down in the *sharīʿa* law.<sup>453</sup>

Islam means submission (*istislām*). Terminologically it means submission to God and a recognition of His attributes of *ulūhiyya* such as having authority (*sulṭa*) and *ḥākimiyya* over all His creatures, and governing human life according to His *sharīʿa*.<sup>454</sup> Therefore, Quṭb believed Islam to be part of religion, since it meant the

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<sup>449</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:829.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 2:841.

<sup>451</sup> *Ḥad* (pl. *ḥudūd*) refers to penalties (prescribed in the Qur'ān).

<sup>452</sup> *Taʿzīr* refers to any penalty that is not prescribed in the Qur'ān and its enforcement is dependent on the discretionary power of the judge.

<sup>453</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:895.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., 2:828–829.



government (*al-ḥukm*) of one's life and the practical implementation of those religious principles. As Quṭb emphasized:

This is a religion (*al-dīn*), and a confession (*al-iqrār*) of it is a faith (*īmān*), and a complete government (according to those principles) is Islam. And those who do not govern (their lives) according to what God has revealed are unbelievers (*kāfirūn*), iniquitous (*ẓālimūn*) and evildoers (*fāsiqūn*) for they seek the *jāhiliyya* government (instead of the Islamic government). For the true believers (*mu'minūn*) and Muslims will not seek the *jāhiliyya* government (to rule their lives).<sup>455</sup>

According to Quṭb, among the causes leading people to become unbelievers, iniquitous and evildoers was their rejection of practising what had been revealed by God in the Qur'ān. Here, rejection of God's commands means rejecting God as the Law-Giver and the moral guide of humankind, and recognizing instead man-made laws to govern human life.<sup>456</sup> Nothing was more dangerous than rejecting God's attributes, including His *ḥākimiyya* and status as a Law-Giver (*mushrīʿ*), since such action would drive people away from His religion. That is why, in discussing the implementation of God's injunctions as revealed in the Qur'ān, Quṭb always reminded his readers of the danger of the subject, since ignoring some of these religious elements would mean a complete departure from religion.<sup>457</sup>

Quṭb's concern with the application of *sharīʿa* laws to human society is clearly evident here. Ignoring one part of the *sharīʿa* would mean a departure from Islam, because Islam required the complete adherence to God's commands and injunctions, even their smallest aspects.<sup>458</sup> It included questions relating to *ʿaqīda*, *ʿibāda*, and the formation of government. This is what Quṭb tried to explain in his discussion of *Sūra Āl ʿImrān*, *al-Nisā'* and *al-Mā'ida*, which, he said, were

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<sup>455</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:825.

<sup>456</sup> Detailed discussion on God's attributes has been touched earlier in Chapter Four.

<sup>457</sup> For Quṭb's discussion of the need to implement *sharīʿa* law, see, for instance, Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:827, 841 and 887–891.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:827.



interrelated in emphasizing the objectives of the Qur'anic revelation to establish a Muslim community, found a state, and organize society on the basis of a true belief (*ʿaqīda*).<sup>459</sup> All these were regarded as *al-dīn*, where it brought together human society as revealed in the Qur'ān. Having a belief in those things is faith (*īmān*), and Islam governed them all.

From the above definition of *al-dīn* and Islam, it could therefore be said that in Quṭb's view, the establishment of a state was a religious duty, and this distinguished Islam from other religions. However, a question arises here: To what extent is the establishment of a state considered so important? Why is the state related to religion and Islam in the context of Quṭb's discussion?

Besides considering the establishment of a state as an indication of the Muslims' recognition of the *ulūhiyya* of God (by fulfilling religious requirement), Quṭb saw that only through the state, would the application of *sharīʿa* law be effective. In addition, the welfare of the people, including individual ownership (*al-mulkiyya al-fardiyya*)<sup>460</sup> could be preserved, irrespective of their race, nationality, and beliefs. Thus, the establishment of a state, in Quṭb's view, was the means of ensuring adherence to His commands and injunctions in accordance with the Qur'ān. If there was no state, God's commands and injunctions could not be implemented in human society. Quṭb thus saw that once the state was established it became an obligation for its ruler or *imām* to apply the *sharīʿa* law since the power was already in his hand. Quṭb's opinion on this point was similar to that of al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyya and al-Māwardī, mentioned earlier. However, he went further in explaining the meaning of this religious duty when he listed God's attributes like *ḥākimiyya* and *rubūbiyya* together as the basis of state administration.

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<sup>459</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:825.

<sup>460</sup> Individual ownership or private ownership is discussed in the subsequent topic under the heading of wealth and social equity.

One question arises here: how are those religious principles to be applied to the reality of human society according to Quṭb's understanding of religion and Islam? How can Muslims practise their belief in this modern age which has built secular institutions "on the ruins of religion"? Quṭb's view was that any questions on the enforcement of *sharīʿa* laws (as such *ḥudūd*, *qiṣāṣ* and *taʿzīr*) and other religious duties could be resolved only after the establishment of Islamic authority. And "this power of implementation (*quwwat al-tanfīdh*) exist (only) in a Muslim community within Islamic territory (*Dār al-Islām*)."<sup>461</sup>

Quṭb believed that the existence of a Muslim community would lead to the establishment of an Islamic state within *Dār al-Islām*. The state, according to him is a power representing the whole community to execute the *sharīʿa*. This chronological discussion of Quṭb's understanding is clearly stated as follows:

The Qur'ān was revealed to the heart of the Prophet – peace be upon him – that the Prophet through the Qur'ān could establish a community, found a state, organize a society, educate minds, personalities and intellects, define the relations with that (Islamic) society and the relations of that (Islamic) state with other states, and the relations of that (Islamic) community with other communities. All would be linked: one strong bond would unite the different aspects, tying them to one source, to one authority, to one directing force – and that is religion, as it is in its reality with God, and as Muslims knew it in the days when they were Muslims!<sup>462</sup>

He commented elsewhere on this theory:

Among people's rights are their right to eat, drink, wear (clothing) and have a shelter to live in...it therefore becomes the responsibility of the community or a state representing the community to provide them with those necessities, firstly, through work – so long as they are capable of working. And it becomes the state's responsibility to teach them how to work and provide them with all necessary means to find work and perform it easily.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:873.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid., 2:825.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid., 2:882.

Therefore, Quṭb believed that the establishment of a Muslim community leading to the creation of an Islamic state was essential because both indicated human submission to God as stated in the meaning of religion itself.

It is important to notice that Quṭb gave a very clear discussion on the necessity of an Islamic state at the beginning of his commentary on *Sūra al-Mā'ida*, in which he first addressed questions on *‘aqīda* and *sharī‘a*, including *ḥudūd*, *qīṣaṣ*, etc. Quṭb ended the discussion with the need to establish a Muslim community and an Islamic state to put the *‘aqīda* and *sharī‘a* into practice. His treatment of this question, of course, differed from that of the traditional scholars'. In *al-Siyāsa al-Shar‘iyya*, for instance, Ibn Taymiyya stressed that the establishment of an Islamic state was a religious duty without elaborating on the meaning of this religious duty. In addition, Ibn Taymiyya laid greater emphasis on the negative impact on human welfare if there was no Muslim authority to regulate society, such as the spread of injustice and social chaos. Regarding the goals of an Islamic state, he said:

The greatest goal of the state is to enjoin good and forbid evil: for example, performance of prayer, payment of *zakāt*, fasting, truth, honesty, obedience to parents, good relations with kinsmen, good conduct within the household, with neighbours, etc.<sup>464</sup>

Quṭb, on the other hand, emphasized the establishment of a Muslim community and Islamic state as a religious duty as manifested in the declaration *lā ilāha illa 'llāh*, discussed in Chapter Four of this study. Rejecting this religious duty, in Quṭb's view, not only distanced individuals from Islam, but also drove them into the arms of the evildoers or unbelievers. That is why he described the enemies of Islam not only as unbelievers, but also as people claiming to be Muslim. This is because true Muslims who believed in God and were willing to govern their lives according to the Qur'ān would not follow certain religious duties and ignore others.

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<sup>464</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Siyāsa al-Shar‘iyya*, 90–91.



In this regard, Quṭb's departure from Ibn Taymiyya's views (as could be seen from the latter's *al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya*) was perhaps, due to the different environments of the two scholars. Quṭb's summons to the people to a religious teaching required a clear and detailed explanation of the doctrine so that Muslims would know how to put their religion into practice. This was not the situation during Ibn Taymiyya's lifetime, however, as can be perceived from his writing.

As noted earlier, Quṭb divided the world into two; *Dār al-Islām* (Islamic territory) and *Dār al-Ḥarb* (un-Islamic territory).<sup>465</sup> *Dār al-Islām* referred to any country whose government was based on the *sharīʿa*. It did not matter whether its population was wholly Muslim or a combination of Muslim and non-Muslim, so long as the ruler was a Muslim who executed the *sharīʿa* of God.<sup>466</sup> *Dār al-Ḥarb* on the other hand, referred to any country whose government was not based on the *sharīʿa* of God, even though all its citizens were Muslim.<sup>467</sup> This definition took the application of the *sharīʿa* law as the main criterion to claim a society or a state as part of *Dār al-Islām*, irrespective of whether the people living within its boundaries were all Muslim or non-Muslim.

The state, in Quṭb's view, existed within *Dār al-Islām* and not in *Dār al-Ḥarb*. This was because the state was created to represent the Muslim community in executing the *sharīʿa* law. There was no so-called state boundary or frontier. The only boundary known in Islam was faith and the practical application of the *sharīʿa* of God. Otherwise such a state constituted part of *Dār al-Ḥarb*. Quṭb's definition also implied that only in *Dār al-Islām* would one find peace and harmony, since society and the economy were controlled by divine law. In addition, a person's right to private ownership and religious freedom would be preserved in such a state.

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<sup>465</sup> Sometimes the term *Dār al-Ḥarb* is used to refer to non-Muslim territory. See, Akram Ḍiyā' al-ʿUmarī, *Madinan Society at the Time of the Prophet*, trans. Hudā Khattāb (Hendon, VA: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1991).

<sup>466</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:873. See also 1:375.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:874.



Quṭb maintained that the authority exercised by the state was not absolute. It was a trust (*amāna*) from God, and it was to be exercised in accordance with the terms laid down in the *sharīʿa* to serve the welfare of all its citizens. This meant that the religious leader or *imām* did not possess any real authority, for the source of authority was God. This was in line with the state's role representing the Muslim community in compiling its agenda to provide the people's basic necessities, which constituted their rights as citizens of the state.<sup>468</sup>

Quṭb also believed that the creation of a Muslim community and an Islamic state paved the way to the establishment of the *ḥākimiyya* of God on earth and eliminating all kinds of oppression and slavery of humans by humans.<sup>469</sup> Therefore those who asserted that they were Muslim and believed in God and His attributes were bound by these responsibilities throughout their lives.<sup>470</sup>

It could be said that the political system in Islam and other Islamic principles were a means to bring everyone, and the Muslim *umma* in particular, to observe God's commands in a true sense. At the same time it also guided society towards all individual and communal needs. In fact, there were numerous legal provisions that could not be implemented without the existence of a strong authority (*sulṭa*) which could administer the society or the state with justice.<sup>471</sup> Therefore, the establishment of a state with a just government which obeyed God's commands was essential, because true reform, be it moral, social, economic or any other, could never be achieved while power was in the hands of corrupt people.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:882.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid., 2:887–889.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid., 2:825–826.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid., 1:601.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid., 2:878–879.

### 5.3 Characteristics of an Islamic political system

We have addressed generally the political system of Islam and its significance as part of a religious doctrine. We have also examined Quṭb's political discourse, including his view on the need to establish a Muslim community and an Islamic state. Not surprisingly, Quṭb's discussion on the nature of politics in Islam indicated his belief that Islam and politics were inseparable and the struggle to gain authority (*sulṭa*) was essential to enable people to follow God's *manhaj*.<sup>473</sup>

It appears that Quṭb was on the same ground as some eminent Muslim scholars of the past who had strongly advocated that political power was necessary to enforce Islam fully in personal and social life. Scholars like al-Māwardī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya were of this opinion. The view of modern scholars, however, was that Quṭb followed al-Mawdūdī's ideas, especially on the necessity of the state and its characteristics, such as *ḥākimiyya* and *khilāfa* government, which are discussed below.

Both traditional and modern scholars outlined several characteristics and principles upon which the political system of Islam was based. However, our study suggests that in his discussion Quṭb specifically emphasized only the major characteristics which, according to him, were the most essential elements applicable to Muslims of this modern age who were facing social and political disparity. Thus total submission to God and return to His commands regarding their social and political life were vital. Moreover, Quṭb believed that it was on this very same basis that the Prophet (pbuh) himself had struggled throughout his life to bring his people to the right path.

Quṭb also held the view that the characteristics of Islamic politics (as listed below), were applicable in all circumstances of Muslims' lives, whether they were living in a society, a community or a state. This was because the purpose of human

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<sup>473</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:696.

existence was to seek God's pleasure by following His commands and to be ready to accept Him as the Law-Giver Who had the right to direct His created beings to any path in line with His Will.

Quṭb's views on the characteristics of the Islamic political system are therefore discussed under the following headings:

1. God's Sovereignty (*Hākimiyyat Allah*)
2. Caliphate or Imamate Government (*Hukumat al-Khilāfa aw al-Imāma*)
3. Consultative Government (*Hukūmat al-Shūrā*)
4. Pledge of allegiance (*Bay'at*)
5. Obedience (*Ṭā'at*)
6. Justice and Equality (*al-ʿAdl wa'l-Musāwā*)

### 5.3.1 God's Sovereignty (*Hākimiyyat Allah*)

The idea of God's sovereignty was widely stressed by Quṭb in *Zilāl* during his discussion on the doctrinal concept (*al-taṣawwur al-ʿtiqādī*) as well as on questions regarding the socio-political aspects of Muslim society, including the establishment of the Muslim community and the Islamic state. To understand Quṭb's reasons for emphasizing this idea, one needs to look back at Quṭb's definition of religion and Islam described earlier. Quṭb believed that Islam was a religion (*dīn*) of *ʿaqīda* and *sharīʿa* where both should run parallel in Muslim life. Therefore, it was obligatory for every Muslim to believe in the sovereignty of God since it was one of His attributes and His *ulūhiyya*. To put this belief into practice, individual Muslims had to refer to the *sharīʿa* of God to govern their daily lives.<sup>474</sup>

If one analyses the terminology of modern political science, the word sovereignty means a complete suzerainty. Though it has numerous definitions, all

<sup>474</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:890, 902. See also 4:2526.

signify the highest governmental and legal authority of some sort.<sup>475</sup> Jean Bodin, for instance, regarded as perhaps the first scholar to have developed the concept of sovereignty in modern political thought, defined it (sovereignty) as the supreme owner of the state over citizens and subject, unrestrained by law.<sup>476</sup> Sovereignty has also been defined as the supreme political power in one whose acts are not subject to any other and whose will cannot be overridden.<sup>477</sup>

These definitions show that if a person or an institution is to be “sovereign”, then it would follow that the word of that institution or person is law. A “sovereign” has also an undisputed right to impose orders on people living under his or her rule, who are under an absolute obligation to obey any command from him, willingly or unwillingly.

Islam by its very nature, Quṭb maintained, was opposed to the idea that an individual or community had full power to legislate or claim absolute, permanent sovereignty, because only God was sovereign over the entire universe and so had ultimate power.<sup>478</sup> This meant that in an Islamic society the political authority was subject to the divine laws (*sharīʿa*). Thus, an Islamic state had neither the independence to conduct its foreign policies, nor did it have the exclusive right to lay down its domestic policies, for its authority is restrained by the *sharīʿa*. Quṭb commented on God’s sovereignty, as follows:

Authority belongs to God. It is exclusive to God in His *ulūhiyya*. Since the sovereignty is one of the characteristics of the *ulūhiyya* of God, [therefore] whoever claims having such an attribute has indeed contested God’s right to His *ulūhiyya*.<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>475</sup> Abu’l-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī, *First Principles of the Islamic State*, trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publication Limited, 1974), 16.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>477</sup> This is the view of Grotius, another scholar of Political Science. See Mawdūdī, *First Principles of the Islamic State*, 18.

<sup>478</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 4:1990.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.



Quṭb also declared:

This religion is a universal declaration of human liberation on earth from bondage to people or to human desires...The declaration of God's sovereignty means: a comprehensive revolution against human governance in all its perceptions, forms, systems and conditions and total defiance against every condition on earth in which humans are sovereign – or to put it in other words, in which divinity belongs to humans...in which the source of power is human...making some the masters of others while ignoring God. This declaration means the removal of God's usurped sovereignty and its restoration to Him.<sup>480</sup>

Quṭb's idea of sovereignty clearly differed from modern Western political ideology in that to God alone belonged sovereignty and to Him alone belonged command. Thus no one had a right to claim this attribute of God. Quṭb's argument was based on several verses of the Qur'ān, among which was verse 40 of *Sūra* 12 (*Yūsuf*), when God said:

The command (or the judgment) is for none but Allah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him; that is the (true) straight religion, but most men know not.

According to Quṭb, this verse confirmed that command, judgment and obedience were among only God's attributes and were therefore not available for humans to claim. Anyone trying do so was surely guilty of disbelief (*kufr*) because he or she had contested God's right of sovereignty.<sup>481</sup>

Quṭb described the subject of God's sovereignty as a very dangerous and sensitive issue. History has shown how messengers of God who were sent to their people were challenged while preaching their message. It was the idea of God's sovereignty that led to struggles between right and wrong and good and evil. The Prophet Muḥammad's teachings, for instance, received great opposition from within his own tribe, not merely because of his call to recognize God as the only One who

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<sup>480</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 3:1433.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:1990. See also 1:194.

had created all humankind, the universe etc. The main reason for their opposition, Quṭb maintained, was the prophet's call to recognize God as the Law-Giver and His *sharīʿa* as the only law to govern human life.<sup>482</sup> This was the crucial factor, since his opponents knew and understood that making the declaration the words “*la ilāha illa'llāh*” (there is no god but Allah) required them to give total obedience to God and follow His *manhaj* as stated in the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* of the Prophet. As a result, the previous management of their social, political and economic affairs, based on exploitation and oppression of the weak and the poor, must be abandoned and replaced with a new system acceptable to God. When referring to this polytheism (*shirk*) of the Quraysh people, Quṭb said that although they believed in the existence of God, Who controlled the universe etc., when it was a question of their social and economic activities, they legislated for their own convenience instead of following God's laws.<sup>483</sup>

The Prophet Moses (pbuh) experienced a similar struggle when he was sent to Pharaoh who had declared openly to his people that: “I am your lord, most high.”<sup>484</sup> According to Quṭb, the attribute of divinity claimed by Pharaoh did not mean a lord who created the universe and controlled all its activities. Pharaoh's claim to divinity was to indicate that he alone was the ruler who controlled law and order. No outside agency imposed any restrictions on his power to rule.<sup>485</sup>

It became clear that the major struggle between Islam and human society was over the question of “sovereignty”, in which people began to misuse its meaning and claim for themselves an attribute which belonged to God alone. Quṭb emphasized this fact and reminded his readers that the recognition of this sovereignty must therefore be manifested in the reality of human society. By doing so, people would

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<sup>482</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 3:1217.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:1761.

<sup>484</sup> Qur'ān, 79:24.

<sup>485</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 3:1353.

have fulfilled their duty as God's servants in that they showed total respect for God as their Master, and their Ruler (*sulṭān*).<sup>486</sup> Quṭb further argued:

The declaration of faith, "*lā ilāha illā 'llāh*", means that there is no god but Allah, and it also means that there is no master (*ḥākim*) but Allah and no legislator but Allah alone.<sup>487</sup>

Those who asserted that they were Muslim and recited the *shahāda*,<sup>488</sup> but, in the reality of their daily lives, refused to recognize God as ruler and legislator, were among the polytheists (*mushrikūn*) according to Quṭb, because "obedience and judgment in what God has revealed is *īmān* and Islam."<sup>489</sup> There were various forms of *shirk* and that was one of them, as Quṭb states:

The polytheism (*al-shirk*) initially is the recognition of those other than God as having the characteristic of *ulūhiyya*...whether it is a belief that he can run the events and control all welfare..or giving to [people or things] other than God in his worship and vows etc., or in making laws other than those revealed by God to manage life.<sup>490</sup>

Two questions arise here: If sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*) resided in God alone and not in a person or human institution, what was the position of human beings on earth? Indeed, what was the position of a Muslim who had been selected by a majority of Muslims to lead the community and look after its welfare? In this regard Quṭb maintained that the location of sovereignty in God meant that people were God's vicegerents on earth, and their mission in life was to establish and carry out the commands of the Sovereign. In the context of the state, this meant that the *imām*,

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<sup>486</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:828.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 2:705. For a detailed analysis of the declaration and its connection with the *ulūhiyya* of God, see Chapter Four.

<sup>488</sup> It is a testimony or a bearing witness that there is no god but Allah and Muḥammad is God's messenger.

<sup>489</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:828.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid., 2:1063.

or those in authority, had the power to lead their people and apply to them the *sharīʿa* of God so long as they themselves believed in God's sovereignty and their authority aimed to enjoin right and forbid evil (*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy ʿani'l-munkar*), according to the Qur'ānic teachings. This was because only in the command and *sharīʿa* of God would people find justice in the real sense, since it was not influenced by any human desires. All people were equal and treated justly before the *sharīʿa* of God.<sup>491</sup> Quṭb based his arguments on the following verse of the Qur'ān when God said:

Those (Muslim rulers) who, if We give them power in the land, (they) enjoin *Iqāmat* as *Salāt* [i.e. to perform the five compulsory congregational *Salāt* (prayer)], to pay the *Zakāt* and they enjoin *al-Ma'rūf* (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do), and forbid *al-Munkar* (i.e. disbelief, polytheism and all that Islam has forbidden) [i.e. they make the Qur'ān the law of their country in every spheres of life]. And with Allah rests the end of (all) matters (of creatures).<sup>492</sup>

According to Quṭb, the importance of emphasizing the idea of God's sovereignty, as part of Muslim belief and manifestation of faith was that it would combat any misunderstanding of Islam as a comprehensive religion, covering all aspects of Muslim life. In this modern age, with the tendency to imitate the Western way of life and thinking, there arose some Muslims who began to view Islam as a religion restricted only to emotional belief and ritualism. This misunderstanding of its true concept of worship (*ʿibāda*) led those people to think that the meaning of *ʿibāda* and its practices was limited to prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. They were not aware of other Islamic principles such as the necessity of establishing an Islamic state and the implementation of *sharīʿa* law in all human social and economic affairs.

Quṭb rejected this misunderstanding, stating that Islam was a religion of *daʿwa* (calling people) to worship God Alone. It was a servitude (*ʿubūdiyya*) to God

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<sup>491</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:929, 948–951. See also 4:2526.

<sup>492</sup> Qur'ān, 22:41.



alone, without any associates with His *ulūhiyya*. This nature of servitude to God was different from the meaning of *‘ibada* as understood in the *jāhiliyya*, which merely limited its scope to performing rituals.<sup>493</sup> Thus, servitude to God required Muslims to bear in mind that there was only One God Who created everything. It is therefore His law that was to be followed and implemented in human life.<sup>494</sup>

Quṭb further contended that with a strong belief that *ḥākimiyya* belonged to God alone, it was therefore logical that the *sharī‘a* was the only law to be followed and implemented in human society instead of man-made laws. His argument was based on several Qur’anic verses, among which was verse 59 of *Sūra* 4 (*al Nisā’*):

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muḥammad pbuh), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger (pbuh), if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination.

With regard to those who rejected God’s command and ignored the *sharī‘a* in their judgment, Quṭb cited verse 60 of the same *Sūra*, describing their position in the sight of God:

Have you seen those (Hypocrites) who assert that they believe in that which has been sent down to you, and that which was sent down before you, and they wish to go for judgement (in their disputes) to the *Ṭāghūt* (false judges) whereas they have been ordered to reject them. But the *Shaiṭān* (Satan) wishes to lead them far astray.

Quṭb argued that these verses provided two important principles for the Muslim *umma* to follow: first, giving total obedience to God and His Messenger, and, secondly, making judgments (*ḥukm*) based on the Qur’ān and the *Sunna* of the Prophet.<sup>495</sup> These are the two prerequisites of faith in God and His attributes of

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<sup>493</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:25, 200.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid., 2:828.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., 2:687.

*ulūhiyya*: Therefore, those who intentionally declared their obedience to God and belief in His *ulūhiyya* while using other systems as the source of legislation, were surely indulging in disbelief (*kufr*).<sup>496</sup>

Another important principle to be derived from the above verses is that no one had the right to claim absolute, permanent and indivisible sovereignty, because God was the only sovereign over the entire universe and had all the attributes of ultimate power. This implied that political authority was also subject to God's law, which provided its basis. Human beings as God's vicegerents had only one choice: that of exercising God's law, since it was a trust (*amāna*). The power of exercising this trust was given only to the *imām* who was chosen or appointed with the consent of all members of the community to judge with justice.<sup>497</sup>

Therefore, it seems that the real holders of authority are the people, and the *imām* is appointed by the community only for exercising the authority vested in them. This, in fact, is the most significant step towards a representative government which is commissioned to carry out God's mandate. It also implies that the leader has a right to be obeyed, as the above verse describes, as long as he does not deviate from the basic instruction of the *sharī'a*.

An analysis of Quṭb's understanding of the nature of human beings as God's vicegerents suggests that he was influenced by the ideas of al-Mawdūdī who said:

The proper kind of Government comes into existence only when man accepts the position that he is not an autonomous being who can do anything he likes or serves his interest. Rather, he is the *khalīfa* or vicegerent, he has to act as trustee and execute the will of Allah as revealed through His Prophets...The people who manage the affairs of the Muslim *umma* believe that they are responsible and answerable to Allah for the way in which they conduct the Government. They have been placed in the position of rulers, not to impose their own will on the people, treat them like slaves...They should believe, on the other hand, that this burden has been laid on them so

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<sup>496</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:687–688.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:688–689.

that they may enforce justice and equity among the people by observing Divine laws and making others observe them.<sup>498</sup>

This statement shows that al-Mawdūdī held a similar view with Quṭb that the political system of Islam was based on God's sovereignty, not man-made law. In addition, al-Mawdūdī himself clearly indicated that the legislative sovereignty of God must become the foundation of the Islamic state, which meant that:

Allah is the Law-Giver and the moral guide of man, and it is incumbent on every citizen of the Islamic state who claims to be a follower of Islam to accept the moral guidance of Allah and obey the commands and injunctions of God in socio-economic and political life as laid down in the Holy Qur'ān and the *Sunna* of the holy Prophet.<sup>499</sup>

One may ask that if both al-Mawdūdī and Quṭb shared the view that the foundation of the political system of Islam must be based on God's sovereignty in the sense that God's *sharīʿa* must govern human life, what did other traditional scholars or Muslim jurists think about this question? Did they acknowledge the relationship between God's sovereignty and the political system of Islam? In this regard, one must bear in mind that no such term as *ḥakimiyya* existed in the traditional scholars' discussions or writings, since it was not mentioned in the Qur'ān. However, this does not mean that they ignored questions of judgment or the governing of human society in accordance with God's *sharīʿa*. Ibn Kathīr (d.1372), for instance, said:

all these ideas [as mentioned in Ganghis Khan's *Yasa*] are contradictory to the laws (*sharīʿa*) of Allah, which were revealed to His servants among the Prophets, peace be upon them all. Therefore, whoever neglects the law of judgment revealed to Muḥammad, son of ʿAbdullah, the last of all Prophets, and carries out a lawsuit based on other laws which had been abandoned, is surely a disbeliever; so what is the position of those who carry out a lawsuit

<sup>498</sup> Abū'l-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī, *Islamic State*, trans. Mazheruddin Siddiqi (Karachi: Islamic Research Academy, 1986), 10.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

based on *al-Yasa* and give preference to it over God's law? Indeed, whoever does that is surely a disbeliever with the consent (*ijmā'*) of all Muslims.<sup>500</sup>

Al-Māwardī maintained that there were ten conditions regarding public affairs which are binding on the *imām*. They included (1) to guard the *dīn* as it was established in its original form; (2) to execute legal judgment between two contestants and bring them back to the path of God; and (3) to establish the *ḥadd* punishments to maintain justice:

If the *khalīfā* fulfils these people's rights, he has executed the claim of God, may He be Exalted, regarding the latter's rights and duties: in which case they (the people) have a duty to obey and support him as long as his state does not change.<sup>501</sup>

However, as al-Māwardī argued further, if the *Imām* deviated from the path of God, in that he "commits forbidden acts, pursues evil, is ruled by his lust and is subject to his passions, this counts as a moral deviation which excludes him from taking up the Imamate or from continuing on with it."<sup>502</sup>

It seems that the idea of God's sovereignty, which implied judgment based on the *sharī'a*, was essential in governing the state or Muslim community, because it was closely related to obedience to God's command as a whole. Quṭb's idea of God's sovereignty (*ḥākimiyyat Allah*) as one of the characteristics of the Islamic political system was, therefore, not unusual in its discussion. Rather, this idea, which placed the Qur'ān and *Sunna* of the Prophet as the highest sources of legislation by the government was generally in line with the views of some of the contemporary and traditional scholars regarding the reality of Islamic politics. The only distinguishing factor was Quṭb's use of the term *ḥākimiyya*, which was seen by many as a

<sup>500</sup> Abū'l-Fidā'al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa'l-Nihāya* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1998), 13:119. See also Sivan, *Radical Islam*, 96–99.

<sup>501</sup> Māwardī, *al-Ahkām al-Sulṭāniyya*, 18.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.



derivation from al-Mawdudī's thought.<sup>503</sup> Quṭb's objective in emphasizing the sovereignty of God, and his mission to achieve justice in human society were similar to that of the traditional scholars, that is making the *sharīʿa* of God the only basis of legislation (*qāʿidat al-tashrīʿ*). Khālidī pointed this out in his writing, and said that Quṭb's emphasis on the sovereignty of God followed the same line with that of the Muslim jurists' view when "they all were in agreement that the source of legislation in regard to human affairs is God. Therefore, Quṭb was right in employing this Islamic term."<sup>504</sup>

The idea of God's sovereignty as one of His attributes as enunciated by Quṭb, and its derivation from the declaration of faith "*la ilāha illa 'llāh*" (there is no god but Allah) seem to have been relevant to the Muslim society of the mid-twentieth century. Of course, Quṭb's own experience of life in Egypt at that time led him to emphasize this idea as a means of solving the problems of his country. I say this because such an idea would at least wake up Muslims to the fact that their *īmān* and *Islām* would not be complete unless they followed God's command in all walks of life. Moreover, any Muslims who declared their faith to God and His Prophet would not be considered true believers so long as they referred to other laws instead of the *sharīʿa* of God to govern their lives.

According to Quṭb, once Muslims recognized the sovereignty of God and put it into practice, people claiming to be sovereign would no longer exist. More importantly, a belief in the sovereignty of God would constantly remind Muslims of their role as the servants of God, with no right to claim or exercise any right except in accord with what He had revealed to them.

<sup>503</sup> For al-Mawdūdī's ideas about God's sovereignty and his influence on Quṭb's thought, see the following: Khālidī, *Fī-Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 185; Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*; Haddad, "Sayyid Quṭb," 89–90; Kepel, *Muslim Extremism*, 47–48.

<sup>504</sup> Khālidī, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 185. See also M. Abū Ṣaʿīlik, *Fikr Sayyid Quṭb*, (Ṣanʿā': Maktaba Dār al-Quds, 1999), 48–51.

The feeling of human weakness before God has a positive influence on both the *imām* and the governed. The governed will choose only a person who obeys God's command to represent them. The *imām*, on the other hand, will always remember his being merely a trustee to exercise God's trust in accordance with His *manhaj*. Therefore, claims to absolute power will no longer be heard in human society, since all know that God's power overrules them. Thus peace and justice will be established.

### 5.3.2 Caliphate (*Khilāfa*) or Imamate (*Imāma*) Government

On many occasions in *Zilāl*, Quṭb reminded Muslims of their role on this earth as God's vicegerents, honoured with many distinctions compared with the rest of God's creatures, among which were knowledge and desire. These two important elements, if properly managed in accordance with God's command, would make people superior even to His angels. But if they took the wrong path and indulged in evildoing, then their position would be even worse than that of animals in the sight of God.<sup>505</sup>

There are many verses of the Qur'ān which mention the role of human beings as God's vicegerents on this earth. Among the best known is verse 30 of *Sūra 2 (al-Baqāra)*:

And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: "Verily, I am going to place (mankind) generations after generations on earth." They said: "Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, while we glorify You with praises and thanks and sanctify You." He (Allah) said: "I know that which you do not know."

In interpreting this verse, early Qur'anic commentators and scholars like Ibn al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Abbās (d.670)<sup>506</sup> for instance, decided that the *khalīfa* referred to Prophet Adam and

<sup>505</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:61. The Qur'ān 7:179 makes the very same point.

<sup>506</sup> Ibn al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Abbās was Prophet Muḥammad's cousin. He was known for his mastery in Qur'anic commentary and lived from 619 to 670.

his descendants as successors to the previous generations which God had created on this earth. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.728),<sup>507</sup> on the other hand, viewed the vicegerency of Prophet Adam and his descendants as their role as God's successors to settle the earth and to rule it justly in accordance with God's command. He did not relate this new creation of humankind to the previous generations.<sup>508</sup>

Quṭb held the same opinion on the nature of the *khalīfa* as that of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. This was because Quṭb maintained that the concept of *istikhlāf* (the appointment of human beings as God's vicegerents) on this earth referred to people's capability to develop their lives here and reform them in accordance with God's command. It also referred to their capability to realize (*tahqīq*) justice on this earth.<sup>509</sup>

Therefore, Quṭb understood that the establishment of a *khilāfa* government was necessary to achieve harmony throughout human society on this earth. To support his argument, Quṭb included terms like reign (*mulk*), triumph (*ghalaba*) and government in the meaning of *al-istikhlāf*, so long as they were applied to the development of human society and the realization of the *manhaj* of God, which has been designed for the guidance of humans.<sup>510</sup>

In Quṭb's view, the vicegerency of humankind entailed ruling this earth justly and making judgments in accordance with God's commands. The one who assumed this responsibility was known as the *khalīfa* or *imām*. In describing the nature and responsibility of the *khalīfa*, Quṭb quoted verse 26 of *Sūra* 38 (*Ṣād*) regarding Prophet David (Dāwūd), who was both prophet and *khalīfa*:

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<sup>507</sup> His full name was Abū Saʿīd Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. He was a sufi figure known for piety and uprightness who lived during the Umayyad period.

<sup>508</sup> Abu Jaʿfar Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997), 1:233–238.

<sup>509</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 4:2529.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:2529–2530.

Q Dāwūd (David) Verily We have placed you as a successor on the earth; so judge you between men in truth (and justice) and do not follow your desire—for it will mislead you from the Path of Allah.<sup>511</sup>

The vicegerency of human beings and their duty to rule this earth were also related to the management of the universe. This meant that God created them and imposed upon them the divine duty (the role of *khalīfa*) to carry out His commands so that their lives would run in parallel with the rest of God's creation. The creation of the sun and moon, for instance, clearly showed that they had been arranged in such a manner that precluded collisions. "And the sun runs its course for a period determined for it; that is the decree of (Him), the Exalted in Might, the All-Knowing."<sup>512</sup> Humans, as part of God's creation, were responsible for maintaining the harmony established by Him. This is because the justice required from those vicegerents of the earth (*khulafā' al-ard*) in judging among their people, actually constituted part of the whole truth (*al-ḥaq al-kullī*).<sup>513</sup>

That is why in discussing this question, Quṭb always reminded Muslims to study carefully the Islamic theory about the universe, life and humankind and their correlation before discussing other human social relations, because Islam and all its doctrines, legislation and ritual were built on this fundamental idea.<sup>514</sup> Quṭb's emphasis on a similar idea can be found in his early books, such as *al-Adāla* and *al-Salām al-Ālamī*, as already discussed in Chapter Two of this study.

Looking to Quṭb's political discussion in *Zilāl*, it seems that his emphasis on the Islamic theory of the universe and the vicegerency of humankind was to instruct Muslims in the basics of Islam, so that if they became *khalīfa* or *imām*, they would have a clear understanding of their role.

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<sup>511</sup> Qur'ān, 38:26.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid., 36:40.

<sup>513</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 5:3019.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid., 1:60.



How was it possible to handle the huge responsibility of successfully maintaining justice and harmony in this world comprising people of different colour, race, etc? This was the question that led Quṭb to discuss the establishment of the so-called *khilāfa* government. The idea derived from the fact that it would be impossible for individuals (*afrād*) to implement God's command if they were small in number. A strong organization or a government was essential to look after human affairs and, more importantly, to represent them in executing the *sharīʿa* of God in a true sense. Therefore *istikhlāf* in Quṭb's view was important in an Islamic government because it derived from the basic purpose of human existence in this world, that is, to give total obedience to God by following His *manhaj* of life, which emphasized justice and harmony in human society and opposed all kinds of oppression and exploitation of other people.<sup>515</sup>

Since the government itself represented Muslims in executing God's command, the *khalīfa*, who was selected to lead the government, held the same responsibility. The only difference between the *khalīfa* and other Muslims was that the former had the power to enforce the *sharīʿa* of God and punish those people who deviated from the right path and bring them back to the teachings of Islam. It was, therefore, this duty that made the *khalīfa* or the *imām* eligible to be obeyed by all Muslims. As verse 59 of *Sūra 4 (al-Nisā')* states: "O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muḥammad) and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority."

Citing this verse, Quṭb argued that giving obedience to the *khalīfa* constituted a Qur'anic injunction. This was because after the Prophet there were only the Qur'ān and his *Sunna* as the main sources of legislation for Muslim society. The *khalīfa*'s role was to implement the *sharīʿa* of God as stated in the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* so as to maintain obedience to God and His Prophet. In one of his statements Quṭb stressed: "God sent His messengers to be obeyed (by their people) with His consent,

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<sup>515</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 4:2529.

not to be disobeyed (by their people) on their instruction, nor to become merely preachers and spiritual leaders!<sup>516</sup>

Quṭb sometimes used the term *imāma* to refer to those who led an Islamic government. The *imām* in his view was the one who led the people to the way of God, guided them to the right path and showed a good example to them in conduct and, more importantly, religious commitment.<sup>517</sup> The term *imāma*, according to Quṭb, had three meanings: *imāma al-risāla*, *imāma al-khilāfa* and *imāma al-ṣalāt*. He maintained that *imāma al-risāla* and *imāma al-khilāfa* were integrated, as exemplified by Prophet Muḥammad and Prophet David who not only preached God's message but, at the same time, led their governments. After the Prophet, it became the responsibility of the *khalīfa* or *imām* among Muslims to continue this task through the enforcement of the *sharī'a* law, constant obedience to the Prophet and constant implementation of God's commands.<sup>518</sup> In support of this argument, Quṭb cited verse 124 of *Sūra 2 (al-Baqāra)*:

Verily, I am going to make you an *Imām* for mankind. [Prophet Abraham] said, "And of my offspring (to make leaders)." (Allah) said, "My Covenant (Prophethood) does not include *Zālimūn* (polytheists and wrong-doers)."

This verse, according to Quṭb, clearly signified that only those who worked for justice and executed the *sharī'a* of God were eligible to be *imām*, not those who oppressed other people. He also asserted that the most important criteria in appointing the *imām* were religious commitment and readiness to be a just *imām*, not that of family ties and blood relations.<sup>519</sup>

Quṭb's emphasis on the above criteria derived from his belief that family ties and blood relations could not always guarantee a suitable leader if they were not

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<sup>516</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:695.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 1:112.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid., 2:695–696.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid., 1:112. See also 2:949.

bound by *‘aqīda* and a just administration. It might seem that Quṭb’s notion deviated from that of traditional scholars such as al-Māwardī, who included in the criteria membership of “the family of Quraysh”. However, an analysis of the current political situation in Muslim society suggested that Quṭb’s notion was more appropriate in the modern age. This was because the attraction of worldly pleasure could be strong enough to cause a leader to deviate from the truth. Quṭb admitted this when he studied the current state of Muslim society:

And this is what Prophet Abraham (Ibrāhīm), peace be upon him, was told. This is a [clear] covenant in its wording without any twist and vagueness. [It is] also decisive in dismissing [claims] among those who call themselves Muslims today. It also dismisses their unjust and immoral actions which diverged from God’s path, and also their action in throwing away His *sharī‘a*... And [even though] their declaration is for Islam, at the same time they set aside the *sharī‘a* of God and His *manhaj* from their lives. [Indeed] this is a false declaration which has no [true] basis of a covenant of God (*‘ahd* Allah).<sup>520</sup>

Thus *‘aqīda* and justice were the most important criteria for the imamate, so that any person coming to the post would be from among the God-fearing and ready to execute the *sharī‘a* of God in human affairs.

In regard to the way the *khalīfa* or *imām* come into being, Quṭb stressed that its appointment should be through the *shūrā* system. This was because the holder of that post represented the whole Muslim community to uphold God’s command and put it into the practice. Therefore, the appointment was subject to the will of the people, whose duty would be to supervise and observe their leader’s application of the *sharī‘a*. Meanwhile, no belligerent act was to be permitted against the *khalīfa* or *imām* provided that he did not deviate from the basic instructions of the *sharī‘a*.<sup>521</sup>

Since the government itself was based on *shūrā* and the *imām* was appointed by a majority of *shūrā* members, Quṭb rejected the emergence of another *imām*

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<sup>520</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:113.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:1990.



within the same territory, assuming him to be a transgressor (*bughā*). This was because the role of the *imām* was to maintain justice, unity and solidarity among the members of the community and also to look after their welfare. It would be impossible to do this job effectively if someone else claimed to be *imām*. In Islamic government, Quṭb argued, once an *imām* had been selected to lead the Muslims and had been given a *bayʿa*, no other person could hold the post. Rather, the transgressor was to be fought to bring him back to obey the one *imām*. Quṭb cited the example of Imām ʿAlī (who fought against dissentors at the battles of Camel and *Ṣiffīn*) to show that Islam permitted the *imām* to act against troublemakers so long as he was in the right. Some of the Companions who supported the Imām's action took part in the battles, though there were some who did not participate. According to Quṭb, their non-participation should not be seen as their disagreement with the Imām's opinion. There were also among these Companions some, who were still confused over whether the step taken by the Imām had been permitted by Islam or not. Quṭb then came across a narration which stated that Ibn ʿUmar regretted siding with the Imām, signifying that the Imām was in the right to fight against those who were disloyal to him. This was because his aim was to maintain justice, solidarity and brotherhood among all the members, since love, peace and co-operation had become attributes of an Islamic community.<sup>522</sup>

Since *shūrā* was one of the principles of the *khilāfa* or *imāma* government, any matters concerning Muslims should be discussed first with the *imām*, who would then decide how to proceed. Therefore, Quṭb maintained, it was forbidden for individual Muslims to hold a secret counsel without the *imām*'s consent, considering such conduct as among Satan's attributes. The reason was that such an action was open to misinterpretation by some people and could thus create disunity among Muslims, even though it perhaps intended the betterment of Muslims in general. Moreover, it would arouse suspicion among Muslims, and destroy trust, which was

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<sup>522</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3343.



one of the most important elements in creating solidarity and brotherhood among all Muslims.<sup>523</sup>

Quṭb was clearly describing the role of the *imām* as being the focal point to which everyone referred their problems. It is then for the *imām* to decide, after holding a counsel with the *shūrā* members, what should be done to solve the problem. Indeed, there was a *ḥadīth* forbidding Muslims to hold a secret counsel, even if there were three of them: “when there are three of you, do not hold a counsel between two of you without the attendance of the other member, because such conduct will make him sad.” This *ḥadīth* should become the basic guideline for Muslims so that their community would remain strong because its members trusted one another without creating any confusion among them.

Although the *imām* or *khalīfa* had the authority to enjoin good, forbid evil and expect obedience, there were certain conditions to be fulfilled so as to maintain that right of obedience. Should the *imām* or *khalīfa* act contrary to God’s commands, his appointment would be withdrawn. According to Quṭb, this was to ensure that the leader would always follow the will of the people who had selected him to represent them in fulfilling God’s command. The post of *imām* did not mean that one could act freely in the administration of the state. Rather, the *imām* should always have the consent of the people that he might act in accordance with their desires, enjoining good and forbidding evil, part of the purpose of human existence on earth as God’s vicegerents.<sup>524</sup>

Throughout his discussion on the *khilāfa* or *imāma*, Quṭb was apparently convinced that once this form of government had been established in Muslim community, many problems – such as social, political and economic disparities – would be solved. In administration of the government, for instance, Quṭb found that there was no room for the *khalīfa* or *imām* to act unjustly since the procedure of

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<sup>523</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3510.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid.

appointment (*shūrā*) was such as to make the post-holder the best person to judge according to the *sharīʿa*. Moreover, the concept of *istikhlāf* (the appointment of the *khalīfa*) itself demanded that human beings were to accept guidance (*al-hudā*) only from God and were bound by His *manhaj* of life. Therefore, there was a choice of two paths: to accept God's commands or to follow Satan; there was no middle way.<sup>525</sup>

### 5.3.3 Consultative government (*Ḥukūmat al-shūrā*)

The institution of *shūrā* is considered one of the most important principles in the political system of Islam. History has shown that *shūrā* played an important role in the political development of the early Islamic state in Medina. The Prophet (pbuh) himself continually consulted his Companions in almost all daily affairs of state, which proves that no one in Islam has absolute authority over the affairs of the Muslim community. Although the Prophet received direct commands from God concerning the governing of the state, he was still required to consult his people on the conduct of his government. This, of course, is in line with the verse 159 of *Sūra 3* (*al-ʿImrān*), in which God clearly asked the Prophet to hold a counsel with other Muslims: “and consult them about the affairs. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah, certainly, Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him).”

Furthermore, many of the Prophet's *aḥadīth* emphasized the importance of *shūrā* and its contribution towards just and sound decision-making, as one can see from the following *hadīth*, in which the Prophet is reported to have said, after the revelation of the above verse:

Although Allah and His messenger are in no need of it (consultation), Allah has made it a mercy (*rahma*) for my people; and whoever holds council

<sup>525</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:61. See also 2:888.

among them, he will not be deprived of right guidance, and whoever neglects it will not be devoid of error.<sup>526</sup>

This shows how *shūrā* guides people to a right decision. There is no such feeling of uncertainty and scepticism over such a decision being made since everything is in accordance with what God has commanded, as He promised earlier: “when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah.”

The institution of *shūrā* began during the Prophet’s time. The first verse to be revealed about the subject was verse 38 of *Sūra* 42 (*al-Shūrā*), when God said: “And those who answer the call of their Lord, and perform *al-ṣalāt*, and who [conduct] their affairs by mutual consultation, and who spend of what We have bestowed on them.”<sup>527</sup>

In commenting on “who [conduct] their affairs by mutual consultation” in the verse, Quṭb said:

The expression denotes that all their affairs are discussed in council between them; it makes it a feature of their whole life...It is a Meccan text which existed before the establishment of the Islamic state; therefore this feature is more general and more comprehensive in the life of Muslims than state [matters]. It is a feature of the Islamic community in all circumstances, even if the state, in its particular sense, has not been established yet.<sup>528</sup>

This means that *shūrā* is a feature of the Islamic way of life in general and is not confined to political activities. Every Muslim should discuss with others the problems of every aspect of life. To do so, Muslims need to understand fully the necessity of *shūrā* and its position as one of the criteria of faith, so that mutual consultation will accord with Islamic principles.<sup>529</sup>

<sup>526</sup> See ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Awda, *al-Islām wa Awḍā‘unā al-Siyāsiyya* (Beirut: Mu’assasa al-Risāla, 1997), 194.

<sup>527</sup> Qur’ān, 42:38.

<sup>528</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 5:3165.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid.

Quṭb's statements seem to be in agreement with ʿAwda who commented that the above verse signified the importance of *shūrā* in Muslim life, for its position had been mentioned together with performing prayer, which is an obligatory duty for every Muslim.<sup>530</sup> Though there was still no fully organized Muslim community or state in Mecca at that time, the Qurʾān already regarded *shūrā* as one of the criteria of faith. In other words, there would be no perfection of individuals' faith unless they used *shūrā* in their affairs.<sup>531</sup>

*Shūrā* is an Arabic term derived from the verb *shawara*, which originated from the root *shāra*. *Shāra-yashūru* and *shawrun* mean "he exhibited or displayed [something]." The Arabs said: *shārat al-ʿasal* which means he extracted honey [from its place], or *shārat al-dābba wa shawratuha*, he exhibited or displayed the bees for sale.<sup>532</sup> In technical terms, *shūrā* means extracting and evaluating the opinions of experienced people in certain affairs, with the aim of finding the course of action closest to the truth.<sup>533</sup>

From these definitions it can be said that *shūrā* comprises consultation and evaluation of opinions by members of society to reach the best decision on their affairs. In politics, both the *imām* and the governed are obliged to consult one another regarding administration of their state so that the decisions made are acceptable to all its citizens.

<sup>530</sup> His full name was ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAwda. He was one of al-Bannā's disciples and had served many years as a judge and lawyer in the Egyptian government before joining the Ikhwān in 1940s and becoming one of the important figures of the organization. He wrote many books about Islam, among which were *al-Islām wa Awdāʿunā al-Siyāsiyya*, *al-Islām wa Awdāʿunā al-Qānūniyya*, *al-Māl wa'l-Hukm fī al-Islām* and *al-Tashrīʿ al-Jināʿī al-Islāmī: muqāraran bi'l-qānūn al-waḍʿī*. Among these works, *al-Tashrīʿ al-Jināʿī* was the most widely referred to by scholars, including Quṭb.

<sup>531</sup> ʿAwda, *al-Islām wa Awdāʿunā al-Siyāsiyya*, 193.

<sup>532</sup> Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram al-Anṣār ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), 4:343-437.

<sup>533</sup> ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ismāʿīl al-Anṣārī, *al-Shūrā wa Athāruha fī'l-Dīmuqrāṭiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1996), 4.



Although the Qur'ān mentioned the *shūrā* during the Meccan period, its message was mainly to show that *shūrā* was one of the required characteristics of Muslim society, even if the Muslims comprised a small community without an established state yet. It was, however, during the Medinan period that *shūrā* was institutionalized and made obligatory for the Islamic government. According to Quṭb, this happened after the battle of Uḥud, which took place in the second year after the *hijra*.<sup>534</sup> He cited an important lesson that could be drawn from this battle: the principle of *shūrā* was more important rather than its consequences. In addition, the Prophet's attitudes before and after the battle clearly showed that there was no time for hesitation and regret over a decision resulting from *shūrā*, since it was the outcome of the majority's views and accorded with Islamic principles. Once a decision was made, it had to be implemented. This had been shown by the Prophet, who, after holding council with his companions, entered his house and prepared himself for fighting the enemy outside Medina, even though he himself was of the opinion to stay in Medina and defend it from inside.<sup>535</sup> This was due to the fact that any decision resulting from *shūrā* was a perfect decision and approved by the *sharī'a*. In addition, the procedure of *shūrā* – careful consideration (*taqlīb*) of various standpoints, and then selection of the best of all the courses of action (*ittijāhāt*) suggested by the *shūrā* committee members – was so convincing in finding solutions among Muslims.<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>534</sup> Verse 159 of *Sūra 5 (Āl 'Imrān)* was revealed after the Prophet had engaged in the battle of Uḥud upon the advice of his companions to fight the enemy outside Medina, even though he was of the opinion to stay in Medina and defend it from inside. The event strongly affected the Muslims who started to hold that *shūrā* should not be practised since it gave unfavourable results as experienced by them at Uḥud. This was because the battle showed that the Prophet's view was more correct. Despite this, after those events, God ordered the Prophet to ask forgiveness for his companions and consult with them on every matter in which *shūrā* was needed. This injunction was definite, leaving no room for any doubt that *shūrā* was one of Islam's highest values to which the Muslim *umma* should always and under all circumstances adhere. See Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:501.

<sup>535</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:502–503.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:502.

If the *shūrā* decision represents the majority voice in the Islamic political system, how does it compare with Western democracy, where the majority voice is also taken into account in decision-making? Quṭb contended that *shūrā* was instituted for the benefit of all Muslim affairs, where none of the *shūrā* committee members had a personal interest in every decision made. In addition, these committee members were not allowed to dispute decisions that had already been made and agreed to by the majority. This phenomenon, Quṭb argued, did not happen under the democratic system, since the parliament's voice, represented the interests of some capitalists or other influential figures who already controlled the government and all the members of parliament.<sup>537</sup> Therefore, how could the public attain better protection from every decision made under the parliamentary system if its rights had been ignored in the interests of a particular group of people?

Quṭb's condemnation of Western democracy also derived from his belief that Islam had a comprehensive political system. Therefore, there was no need for Muslims to follow other human ideological systems, since they already had an identity or nationality of their own, which was Islam. As Muslims they were united not by race, geography, language, mutual interest, economics, or even culture, but by their commitment to follow the will of God in their lives.

Quṭb, however, did not give a detailed explanation of the procedure of *shūrā* and the selection of its committee members (*ahl al-shūrā*), since he believed that once an Islamic community or state was established, it would not be difficult for Muslims to find eligible people to fill the posts. In addition, the procedure of *shūrā* itself was open to change and development. It was not "cast in an iron mould" but left to be decided by the circumstances of the community.<sup>538</sup>

In Quṭb's view, the most important thing was to give Muslims a clear picture of the principles of Islam in regard to human society, to enable the establishment of a

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<sup>537</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 3:1754.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:2006–2007; and 5:3165.

community whose members understood their role as Muslims. This is because every Islamic community and state ever established in this world began by calling people to Islam to save them from being continually misled in ignorance.<sup>539</sup> This approach was similar to that of al-Mawdūdī, who argued that the general principles of Islam must be explained first so that Muslims would not have a vague perception of their own religion. Al-Mawdūdī outlined two important facts that every Muslim should bear in mind: first, Islam was neither a religion mixed with other ideological beliefs nor the product of any human mind. It was a universal religion whose objective was to create and cultivate in humankind equality and Islamic attitudes. Secondly, the Islamic principles regarding every aspect of human society were interrelated on the basis of the *tawhīd* of God.<sup>540</sup>

Although *shūrā* was both a religious and legal obligation for Muslims, Quṭb argued that there were still Muslims who knew nothing about this important Islamic principle. This situation, in his view, was due to their environment, which was no longer Islamic:

This ignorant society in which we are living now is not a Muslim society...There is neither the implementation of the Islamic system within it nor the enforcement of the specific laws of Islamic jurisprudence (*aḥkām al-fiqhiyya*) in the system.<sup>541</sup>

It was therefore difficult for such people to appreciate the importance of *shūrā*, and so a clear explanation given in stages was vital.

Quṭb pointed out that questions of the doctrinal concept (*al-taṣawwur al-ʿitiqādī*): *ulūhiyya*, *rubūbiyya* and *ḥākimiyya* no longer had priority in the minds of Muslims. As a result, it was not surprising to see people acting according to their

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<sup>539</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 4:2008.

<sup>540</sup> Abu'l-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī, *Nazariyyat al-Islām al-Siyāsiyya* (Jedda: al-Dār al-Saʿūdiyya, 1985), 11–12.

<sup>541</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 4:2009.

personal opinion, without taking that of other people into account. The situation became more dangerous when those in authority in a community or a state, began to follow their own desires in its administration, instead of listening to the opinion of the *shūrā* committee members before making decision. That was the starting point that led to the emergence of the unjust ruler in human society.<sup>542</sup>

According to Quṭb, the Islamic political system based on *shūrā* did not emerge from a vacuum. It came into being as a result of a well-trained and educated community, whose members had a strong faith in God. It was at this point that Quṭb condemned some writers and scholars who, instead of emphasizing the importance of *īmān* and other doctrinal concept as the basis for the creation of a Muslims community, tended to stress the importance of *shūrā* in this *jāhili* society. This attempt, Quṭb maintained, was meaningless because the principle of *shūrā* would not work effectively in a society based on un-Islamic principles, whose members knew nothing about that important element of Islamic governmental system and did not know how to choose a good leader to represent them.<sup>543</sup> Quṭb also asked how the institution of *shūrā* could be put into practice if there were still people who knew nothing about its principles and objectives, and did not respect the views of other. Instead, these people knew only how to convince others that their views were the right ones. On the other hand, the institution of *shūrā* in Islam, was managed by Muslims who were knowledgeable, who knew how to respect and accept other people's opinions with the hope that such opinions would improve the welfare of the whole Muslim community.

Quṭb therefore listed the following positive consequences of the practice of *shūrā* in the just government of a Muslim community or state:<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>542</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 4:2008–2009.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid., 4:2009.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., 4:2008–2013.



1. There would no longer be unjust rulers since any one coming to be the *imām* would be from the most God-fearing.
2. There would be the opportunity for the governed to advise the *imām* on matters pertaining to the administration of the state. Therefore, it would not be possible for the *imām* to use his power freely since there would be other *shūrā* committee members observing the *imām*'s administration and conduct. In addition, according to the *bay'ā* made with the governed, it became the *imām*'s duty to consult the *shūrā* committee members on matters concerning the administration of his government.
3. Since *shūrā* was based on co-operation, brotherhood and solidarity among Muslims, it would therefore prevent the exploitation of power by the *imām*, because any decision made by him represented the views of other people too. What was clear was that the principle of *shūrā* signified that under an Islamic government there existed a means of a collective decision-making regarding the administration of the state.

#### 5.3.4 Pledge of allegiance (*Bay'ā*)

*Bay'ā* is an Arabic word derived from the root *bā'ā*. Literally it means exchanging money for goods by mutual consent or giving the cost (of the goods) and receiving (in return) the priced goods.<sup>545</sup> As a technical term, *bay'ā* has been defined in various ways. Ibn Khaldūn, for instance, defined it as a commitment to give obedience to the ruler (*waliy al-amr*).<sup>546</sup> *Bay'ā* was also defined as taking an oath to observe what has been prescribed in the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* of the Prophet and to perform the duties required by them.<sup>547</sup>

<sup>545</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 1:299.

<sup>546</sup> Abu ʿĪd, *Nizām al-Hukm fī 'l-Islām*, 248.

<sup>547</sup> This is a definition given by Ibn Aḥmad al-Sanānī in his book *al-Tathnīa ʿalā al-Rawḍ al-Nāẓir*. See Abū ʿĪd, *Nizām al-Hukm fī 'l-Islām*, 248.

Ibn Khaldūn's definition seems to be appropriate for our discussion here, because it refers to an agreement between two parties, the *imām* and the governed people, where the latter give their allegiance to the *imām* by striking their hands with his. They agree to accept him as their leader, to obey his orders and to work with him in protecting the state from its enemies. In fact, it was this kind of *bay'at* that the Medinan people made with the Prophet before his migration to Medina, when they accepted the Prophet (pbuh) as their religious and political leader and undertook to protect him from all his enemies.<sup>548</sup>

The importance of *bay'at* in an Islamic government has been specifically mentioned in the Qur'ān and *Sunna* of the Prophet (pbuh), for example, verse 10 of *Sūra* 48 (*al-Fath*): "Verily, those who give *bay'at* (pledge) to you (O Muḥammad) are giving *bay'at* to Allah. The Hand of Allah is over their hands".

From the *Sunna* of the Prophet one finds that the Prophet himself practised this principle, when, before migrating to Medina, he made a *bay'at* with the people of that city, known as *Bay'at al-ʿAqabat al-ʿūlā* and *Bay'at al-ʿAqabat al-thāni*. In Medina, once the Islamic state had been established, the Prophet began to make a *bay'at* with its citizens, including the people of the books – the Jews and Christians.<sup>549</sup> These events prove that *bay'at* was an important element of an Islamic government since it indicated an agreement between the *imām* and the governed people to struggle together for the improvement in everyone's welfare. The *imām* agreed to uphold God's command in his administration and to look after the welfare of his people in accordance with the requirement of the *sharīʿa* of God. The governed people, on the other hand, agreed to obey their *imām* and to sacrifice their energy, wealth etc. when they were required to do so, even in straitened circumstances. In this regard, the Prophet is reported to have said:

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<sup>548</sup> Abu ʿĪd, *Nizām al-Ḥukm fī'l-Islām*, 249–250.

<sup>549</sup> Abū Fāris, *al-Nizām al-Siyāsī*, 302–303.

those who give a *bayʿa* (pledge) to an *imām*, have given him their hand as a deal and their heart as an outcome. And they must obey him as far as possible. If someone attacks him (the *Imām*), then behead him.<sup>550</sup>

It is clear from the above principles of *bayʿa* that the governed have to obey and assist the *imām* in maintaining and protecting the state from external and internal attacks and to struggle together with him, to maintain the unity of all members within their boundaries, Muslim and non-Muslim.

According to Quṭb, *bayʿa* was an agreement or a contract in Muslim society between Muslims themselves or between Muslims and people of other religious beliefs. In the context of the government, Quṭb viewed *bayʿa* as an agreement between the *imām* and the governed, in which both agreed to work and co-operate for the betterment of their state and achieve God's blessings on all their affairs. The *imām* agreed to follow God's *sharīʿa* in his government, and the governed agreed to obey and co-operate with *imām*. If the *imām* deviated from the *sharīʿa*, by following his own desire instead of the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* (in his administration), he would lose the entitlement to obedience. Obedience was required only for righteous deeds (*al-birr*) and the fear of God (*al-taqwā*), not for any wrongdoing (*maʿṣiya*).<sup>551</sup>

As already noted, the first *bayʿa* ever made in the history of Islam was known as the *bayʿat al-ʿaqaba*, made between the Muslims and the Prophet before his migration. According to Quṭb, it proved how Islam emphasized the principle of obedience and consent from the Muslims towards their leader even though they were only a small community. The *bayʿa* made by Muslims to the Prophet in Mecca clearly showed this reality when they were ready to accept his leadership and obey him even though no form of government had been established. It also indicated that

<sup>550</sup> Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, in Abū Fāris, *al-Nizām al-Siyāsī*, 303.

<sup>551</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 4:2191–2192, 2226. See also 3:1495.

the *bayʿa* made was free from any force. Instead, it was conducted in peace and harmony, where both parties agreed to make the *bayʿa* based on mutual trust.<sup>552</sup>

Quṭb regarded the *bayʿat* made by the Prophet with the Medinan people as political for the stability of their state. He described this form of allegiance as follows:

Once he (the Prophet) put his hand on their hands for allegiance, he was actually representing God since whatever form of agreement someone made with the Prophet, this was really an agreement with God.<sup>553</sup>

Quṭb further contended that it was God who controlled and determined human life. He alone recognized Islam to be a religion in this world and laid down appropriate laws (*sharāʿi*) for Muslims to follow. The role of the Prophet was merely that of God's messenger, to call people back to the way of life prescribed by God and acknowledge Him as their Lord. This recognition of God's sovereignty would remain even after the death of the Prophet, because God was "the Eternal (*bāqin*), the everlasting (*ḥayyūn*), and would not die (*lā yamūt*). But Muḥammad is just a human being (*basyaran*) who surely will die or be killed."<sup>554</sup> For this reason, any *bayʿa* between Muslims and the Prophet was really a *bayʿa* between individuals and God, because the Prophet's words and actions represented the will of God.<sup>555</sup>

According to this understanding, Quṭb therefore, regarded giving *bayʿa* to those in authority among Muslims as a religious duty, so long as the *imām* agreed to follow the example of the Prophet in government.

Since the principle of *bayʿa* is an agreement between Muslims and God, Quṭb rejected any form of *bayʿa* with non-Muslim rulers holding authority in a Muslim community or state. This was because they did not fulfil the criteria of the *sharīʿa*,

<sup>552</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 4:2192. See also 6:3552.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., 5:3320.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid., 2:836. See also 5:3320.



mentioned earlier. Moreover, he wondered how non-Muslim rulers could follow the *sharīʿa* of God if, from the very beginning, they had already rejected the *tawhīd* of God: His *ulūhiyya*, *rubūbiyya* and *ḥākimiyya* in regard to law. Furthermore, Quṭb believed that giving *bayʿa* to a non-Muslim ruler would mean that God's glory and honour could not be manifested in such a state because the Qur'ān and the *Ṣunna* of the Prophet were no longer the source of its legislation.<sup>556</sup>

Therefore, giving the *bayʿa* indicated the Muslim's fulfilment of their agreement (*ʿahd*) with God, for they were obeying His command, such as struggling to enjoin right and forbid evil in their lives. Quṭb regarded Muslims who broke their *bayʿa* as having lost in all aspects of their lives because they had rejected God's great rewards which were bestowed upon those who were loyal to Him. Indeed, verse 10 of *Sūra* 48 (*al-Fath*) states: "whosoever breaks his pledge, breaks it only to his own harm." Quṭb argued that such people were really more concerned about themselves than in following God's command in all aspects of their lives.<sup>557</sup> Once the *bayʿa* was given, Muslims were required to co-operate with the *imām* in any circumstances, including going out to face the enemy for the security of their state. They knew that such a pledge was in reality an agreement with God, Whose reward was great for those who fulfilled it. Examples shown by the Prophet's companions clearly indicated that their commitment to obey the Prophet and to be ready to undertake any religious duties for the sake of God made them eligible to receive God's pleasure.<sup>558</sup> The Qur'ān clearly describes such people as follows:

Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they gave the *bayʿa* to you under the tree: He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down *al-*

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<sup>556</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:780 and 908.

<sup>557</sup> The verse was revealed regarding a group of Muslims in Medina, who broke the *bayʿa* they made with the Prophet when they feared to join the Prophet to meet the Quraysh people outside Medina, assuming that it might threaten their lives, should they come under attack. See Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 6:3321.

<sup>558</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 6:3321.

*sakīna* (calmness and tranquillity) upon them, and He rewarded them with a close victory.<sup>559</sup>

Therefore, the principle of *bayʿa* in Quṭb's view was a divine agreement because it is given to God. However, it could be given only to the Prophet and those in authority among Muslims, who followed the Prophet's example in government. This was because they represented the will of God who witnessed the *bayʿa*.<sup>560</sup>

### 5.3.5 Obedience (*Tāʿa*)

Another important characteristic of the Islamic government is obedience (*tāʿa*) by the governed people to their *imām*. In this regard, obedience to the *imām* becomes obligatory once the governed have given their *bayʿa* to him. This concept is important because the existence of an Islamic state would be meaningless if its *imām* ruled justly according to the *sharīʿa* law but there was no obedience from his people.

According to Quṭb, obedience to the *imām* constituted one of the religious obligations of every Muslim. The Qur'ān first taught the Muslim *umma* the particular importance of *īmān* and Islam. Then it described the system for managing their lives in accordance with God's command, and how it differed from that based on *jāhiliyya*.<sup>561</sup> Among the requirements of the *īmān* and Islam was obedience to those in authority among Muslims.<sup>562</sup>

The history of Islam shows that the early Muslims freely obeyed the Prophet, who was their leader and ruler. This was because they believed that obedience to the Prophet constituted one of the conditions of *īmān* and Islam itself. Ignoring this religious injunction would not only have prevented them from being true believers but also classed them with the liars in their declaration of faith. Quṭb states: "those

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<sup>559</sup> Qur'ān, 48:18.

<sup>560</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 6: 3325. See also 2: 836.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid., 2:686.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 2:686–687.

who seek their judgement from idols, away from the *sharīʿa* of Allah, their claims (of being a Muslim) will not be accepted...because such claims are lies.”<sup>563</sup>

The Qur’ān describes the nature of obedience in Islam: it is not merely obedience to any *imām* or ruler without certain limitations and conditions. Rather, it teaches Muslims a true form of obedience that brings a peace and harmony to both the *imām* and his people. More importantly, such obedience is in line with the requirements of *īmān* and Islam regarding the government. Verse 59 of *Sūra* 4 (*al-Nisā’*) states:

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muḥammad) and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination.

This verse shows that obedience to God and his Messenger has priority over obedience to those in authority among the Muslims. According to Quṭb, this was because the *sharīʿa* of God in the teachings of the Qur’ān and the *Sunna* of the Prophet was reliable, unchanging and applicable to Muslim society regardless of time and place. Both the Qur’ān and the *Sunna* were there for reference by Muslims seeking God’s guidance to solve problems that could not be solved with their own knowledge.<sup>564</sup> Moreover, by referring to the *sharīʿa* of God, Muslims would not lose their way in their search for the truth.

Furthermore, Quṭb believed that obeying God and His Messenger first showed the weakness of human beings who could not see their way clearly especially in chaotic circumstances. At such a time, human knowledge or reason (*ʿuqūl*), however brilliant it might be, would reach its limit in finding a definite solution to human problems. Therefore, it would be the role of the Qur’ān and the *Sunna* of the

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<sup>563</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:687.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

Prophet to guide people and act as a final reference to unite everyone's opinion to reach an unanimous conclusion.<sup>565</sup>

According to Quṭb, obedience to those in authority (*ulī al-amr*), as the above verse describes, was conditional and would depend on how far the *imām* followed the *sharīʿa* of God in his government. The relevant criteria, including the *imām*'s own commitment to Islam and his fulfilment of all religious requirements, such as his obedience to God and His messenger and his duties as a Muslim leader. More importantly, he must recognize the sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*) of God as the absolute authority in the administration of his government by carrying out His *sharīʿa*. However, the *imām*'s right to obedience would cease if he did not fulfil those conditions.

Quṭb's argument was based on the early mentioned verse 59, which, did not repeat the word "*ṭāʿa*" when mentioning those in authority (*ulī al-amr*). This according to Quṭb signified that obedience to those in authority was conditional in that they were obeyed not for their own sakes, but because they, like other Muslim believers, submitted to the authority of God, recognized His sovereignty and followed His *sharīʿa*. If these criteria were fulfilled, then the *imām*'s right to obedience followed.<sup>566</sup>

Quṭb cited several *ahādīth* of the Prophet, which clearly showed that there was no absolute obedience to the command of the *imām*. According to a *ḥadīth* narrated by Yaḥyā al-Qattān, the Prophet said: "A Muslim must listen whether he likes it or not, unless he is commanded to disobey God; In that case he must neither listen nor obey." Another *ḥadīth* narrated by Umm al-Ḥusayn also confirmed this, when the Prophet said: "Listen and obey, even if your governor is a slave (*ʿabd*), so long as he governs you with the Book of God."<sup>567</sup> At this point, one would find that

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<sup>565</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:690.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 2:691.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.



the *imām*'s right to obedience existed when he followed the *sharīʿa* of God and the *Sunna* of the Prophet. If he departed from either, he was no longer entitled to obedience. This was because a true Muslim believer, Quṭb argued, was not one who claimed his faith in God, but then, in passing judgement (on their disputes), adopted a false judgement following his own desire.<sup>568</sup> In this respect, Quṭb quoted verse 65 of *Sūra 4 (al-Nisā')*:

But no, by your Lord, they can have no faith, until they make you (O Muḥammad) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission.

In another instance, Quṭb believed that such a conduct would no doubt lead Muslims into *shirk* with God, as had happened to people in the past. Referring to the Jews (*al-Yahūd*), Quṭb argued that their following of the opinions of their rabbis instead of God's command to govern their lives was a clear example. Whatever the rabbis decided about the permitting (*tahḥīl*) and prohibiting (*tahṛīm*) of food etc. were accepted by the public as a rule to be followed.<sup>569</sup>

Quṭb's above discussion shows that both the *imām* and the governed needed one another in the administration of the government. There would be no just *imam* if none of his people obeyed him. Nor could there be any justice for the governed and society as a whole if they are led by an unjust *imām* who knew only how to oppress and exploit people for his own economic and political interests.

Another important principle to be derived from the above discussion was that the administration of an Islamic government was always overshadowed by God's *sharīʿa*. If there was no specific guidance in the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* on certain questions, then Muslims, in particular the *imām*, were permitted to resort to *ijtihād* as had been demonstrated by the Prophet and his companions. For this reason, there was

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<sup>568</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:687.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:688.

no room for the *imām* to act freely in administrative matters, since he was always required to follow the *manhaj* of God to govern human life as a whole.<sup>570</sup> This, in Quṭb's view, accorded with verse 59 of *Sūra* 4 (*al-Nisā'*): "if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger."

These were the Qur'ānic teachings on the government: no one could claim sovereignty over other men since the sovereignty only belongs to God. Moreover, Quṭb believed that this was what the *īmān* and Islam required from every Muslim. It was a clear statement that, "there will be no true believers (*mu'minūn*) unless they follow it (*manhaj* of God), and there will be no true Muslims unless they put such a *manhaj* into practice."<sup>571</sup>

### 5.3.6 Justice and Equality (*al-ʿAdl wa'l Musāwā*)

Other important characteristics of an Islamic government include justice and equality. In the previous discussion we touched upon Quṭb's view of human equality in general, including the unity of the human race in origin and destiny, in rights and duties before the *sharīʿa* law, with no preferences except those based on righteous works and piety. Here, the discussion focuses on how justice and equality are applied within the government and who should undertake the task of maintaining them.

In the earlier discussion on the *khilāfa* and *imāma* government, we mentioned Quṭb's view regarding criteria to suit someone to the *imām*'s post. Quṭb held a view that the most important criteria were a strong belief in God and justice in administration. He also believed that these two criteria would guarantee a just government in the Islamic state. Thus the implementation of justice and equality was a religious duty for the *imām*, who would lose his right to the post if he did not fulfil that duty. In other words, the *imām* had to be just in his government because performing justice became one of the conditions of the post. If he deviated, his right

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<sup>570</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:691.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:687.

to the post would cease. Justice on the part of the *imām* was also a religious duty in that it indicated the fulfilment of the *bayʿa* that he gave to his people. Therefore any deviation would mean a breach of the agreement with the people and with God in particular.

Islam clearly gives particular attention to justice in government and emphasizes the heavy responsibility borne by the *imām*. According to Quṭb, the aim of the criteria attached to the imamate was to create peace and harmony for all members of the community. These strict conditions would at least make the *imām* feel responsible for leading his people to the right path, following God's command, since he would know that imamate itself was a trust that needed to be fulfilled in the right way.

Quṭb's discussion clearly showed that he believed the *imām* to play a vital role in maintaining justice and equality in the affairs of the people. Moreover, it was through the power (*sulṭa*) granted to the *imām* that enabled him to direct the affairs of his people in line with God's command.<sup>572</sup>

Quṭb regarded the example of the Prophet throughout his life as a guide for the Muslim ruler or *imām* of later generations in putting justice and equality into practice. In teaching equality for example, the Prophet used to practise it daily in both private and public life as a Muslim leader in Mecca and as the head of the Islamic state in Medina. On every religious occasion in Mecca, for example, the Prophet never ignored the poor and the slaves, who were always with him wherever he went.<sup>573</sup>

Besides the Qur'ānic requirement for the administration of justice by Muslims, particularly the *imām*, history has shown that the Prophet and the four

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<sup>572</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 6: 3017. See also 1: 327.

<sup>573</sup> This personal conduct shown by the Prophet had made some Quraysh leaders feel hostile towards him and thus condemn him for being kind to those slaves and the needy, who were nothing in their eyes. There were among these leaders some who set a precedent by stating that if the slaves were ignored, they would be among the people who followed the Prophet and accepted Islam as their religion. See Abū Fāris, *al-Niẓām al-Siyāsī*, 46.

caliphs made justice and equality part of their government. There was no discrimination in colour, family ties or race in their application of the *sharīʿa* law. If it happened that someone might be treated leniently because he or she was related to the Prophet, then the Prophet himself warned his people that he could do nothing for that person who was in the hands of God:

Oh, you Quraysh, I am of no avail to you apart from God, Oh sons of ʿAbd al-Manāf, I am of no avail to you apart from God, Oh ʿAbbās, son of ʿAbd al-Manāf, I am of no avail to you apart from God, Oh, Ṣāfiyya, aunt of the Messenger of God, I am of no avail to you apart from God.<sup>574</sup>

This meant that no one was above the *sharīʿa* law, not even the Prophet or his relatives.

Justice in the administration of the Islamic government also required the *imām* to be fair in passing judgment on his people and their activities. The *sharīʿa* laws must be applied to everyone impartially, regardless of sex, colour, wealth, blood ties and even religious belief. Everyone became equal before the law. Verse 58 of *Sūra* 4 (*al-Nisāʾ*), “when you judge between men, you judge with justice” gives a general description of just judgment, applicable to anyone, according to Quṭb, who was called a human being (*insān*).<sup>575</sup>

Quṭb maintained that the application of justice was not only a religious duty of the *imām*; it also constituted a valuable attribute of a Muslim believer. Therefore, every Muslim, regardless of social status or personal circumstances was required in Islam to uphold justice, even to an enemy. Quṭb based his argument on the following verse of the Quʾrān, when God said:

O you who believe! Stand up firmly for Allah as just witnesses; and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is

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<sup>574</sup> This is one of the Prophet’s *ahādīth* taken from Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla*, 53.

<sup>575</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:689.



nearer to piety; and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do.<sup>576</sup>

Quṭb pointed out that only Islam emphasized justice as a religious duty for believers. It happened that during the Prophet's time, the Muslims living in Medina were asked to treat fairly the Quraysh who had opposed them and had once prevented them from performing worship in Mecca.<sup>577</sup> Quṭb admitted that administering justice to those who had become the Muslims' enemy was not easy, since it required a total commitment to God's command and upholding His injunction without the influence of individual's desires. Therefore fear of God (*taqwā*) was the most useful means in achieving this justice in the sense that one acknowledged that God was monitoring what His servants were doing.<sup>578</sup>

Despite the fact that judgment according to the *sharīʿa* laws becomes a religious duty on the part of those holding authority, Quṭb's emphasis on the principle of justice and equality arose as a result of the personal experience of living under the existing authority of Egypt of the time. As already noted in the first and second chapter of this study, Quṭb was frustrated with the way the government treated its people especially those masses living in poverty. He also criticized the privileged in society, "the aristocrats", for exploiting the people and for their snobbish attitudes towards the peasants and the masses. Turning to the application of the laws in the affairs of Egyptian people, Quṭb saw that there was no justice and equality when it came to the enforcement of the laws. This could be seen, for instance, from the way the government conducted Quṭb's trial and the trial of other Ikhwān members. Quṭb had never been given a proper chance to defend himself in the trial. Also, he was not given the choice of his own lawyer. Instead, the authority chose one of its own lawyers to represent Quṭb. This farcical trial, as Kepel wrote,

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<sup>576</sup> Qur'ān, 5:8.

<sup>577</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:852.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid.

led to Qūṭb's imprisonment and sentence to twenty-five years hard labour. Again, after a summary trial in 1966, at which Qūṭb sat broken by prison torture (which he managed to denounce to the spectators of the court), he and two other Ikhwān members were sentenced to death.<sup>579</sup>

According to Qūṭb, the role of the *imām* in the Islamic state derived, in reality, from the role of humankind on the earth as God's vicegerent. In the context of a government administration, the *imām* represented the whole Muslim *umma* to enjoin the right (*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf*) and forbid the evil (*al-nahy 'ani'l-munkar*). This meant that the *imām*'s role included working together with his people in realizing God's command and maintaining justice, brotherhood and goodness for all.<sup>580</sup> Moreover, the measurement of the *imām*'s success in his job would depend on how ably he ensured that the governed were living in harmony and peace, loving each other and co-operating towards the betterment of their lives.<sup>581</sup>

Qūṭb believed that once justice and equality existed in a Muslim community and the state, many of the problems regarding human affairs could be solved. This was because calling people toward justice in their daily affairs could not be fully successful if there was no system that could impel people to realising such justice. It was therefore the *imām*'s role to apply justice and equality and make this an obligatory duty to his people irrespective of their belief, race, colour and so on. This was because in establishing religious duties, there were individuals who easily accepted God's command, merely by the call for them to observe religious duties imposed upon them. However there were other individuals who needed the enforcement of the *sharī'a* laws to drive them back to the observance of religious

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<sup>579</sup> Kepel, *Muslim Extremism*, 41–42.

<sup>580</sup> Qūṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:327.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:3343.

obligation. The execution of the *sharīʿa* laws to bring these people back to the right path was therefore required.<sup>582</sup>

Justice on the part of the *imām* also included justice in the enforcement of the *sharīʿa* laws pertaining human transactions. In other words, it was the *imām*'s responsibility to monitor businesses run by people under his rule and ensure that they were in accord with Islamic teachings. In terms of economic activities, such as buying or selling, the *imām* had to make sure that there was no cheating with respect to pricing and measuring. This was because ignoring Islamic teachings in regard to business activities would show one's weakness of faith in God. Any attempt to separate the individual's business transactions from Islamic teachings Quṭb held, was a *jāhili* attribute.<sup>583</sup>

Another type of justice in the governmental system included justice in giving witness and judgment and not being influenced by family relations. According to Quṭb, it was the nature of human beings to love their families and relatives. However, in giving judgment and bearing witness, such feelings had to be put aside, because telling the truth was better in God's sight. This was because seeking God's pleasure was the most fruitful business of a Muslim's life, not other worldly activities.<sup>584</sup>

Besides that, establishing justice in the governmental system was a religious obligation. In general, Quṭb's view was in agreement with the views of other scholars. Imām Fakhr al-Rāzī for instance writes: "They (scholars) have agreed that it becomes an obligation upon the ruler to rule with justice."<sup>585</sup> He based his statement on verse 90 of *Sūra* 16 (*al-Naḥl*) when God said:

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<sup>582</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:854.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid., 3:1233.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

<sup>585</sup> Abū Fāris, *al-Niẓām al-Siyāsī fī 'l-Islām*, 47.

Verily, Allah enjoins (*ya'muru*) *al-ʿAdl* (justice) and *al-Ihsān* (righteous deed), and giving help to kith and kin, and forbids *al-Fahshā'* (the evil deeds), and *al-Munkar* (all that prohibited by Islamic laws), and *al-Baghy* (all kinds of oppression). He admonishes you, that you may take heed.

The word '*al-Amr*' found in the verse according to Fakhr al-Rāzī, clearly signifies an obligatory command that need to be applied by those in authority among the Muslims.<sup>586</sup>

In the view of al-Mawdūdī, since the establishment of an Islamic state is a religious duty, it becomes the purpose and function of the state to maintain peace and order in the country and prevent people from wasting their energies in quarrelling etc. However, the real aim is to enforce the system of collective, social and economic justice prescribed in the Qur'ān on human life as a whole. Al-Mawdūdī held the view that there are several means of bringing people to God's commands, sometimes through using the coercive power of the state, sometimes through educating people and sometimes by using the pressure of public opinion.<sup>587</sup> All these seem to be in agreement with Quṭb's opinion mentioned earlier.

If that is the case, there is no room for the *imām* to act unjustly, even towards those who are his personal rivals or enemies. Quṭb saw that the attitude exemplified by the Prophet's companions provided a good lesson. ʿAbdullāh ibn Rawāḥah, for instance, while he was sent by the Prophet to the Jewish community in order to estimate their crop, performed his job justly even though (in doing so) he was unhappy with the Jews trying to bribe him with gold. Quṭb described this event as a good lesson in showing how Muslims have to administer justice in the cause of God and uphold the rights of His creatures, even in doing so is against their own interest. This was clearly stated by ʿAbdullāh himself, who at the end, would be just to them for the sake of his love for the Prophet. The Qur'ān also instructed him to do so by

<sup>586</sup> Abū Fāris, *al-Niẓām al-Siyāsī fī 'l-Islām*, 47.

<sup>587</sup> Mawdūdī, *Islamic State*, 15.



stating: “And do not let hatred of any people dissuade you from dealing justly. Deal just, for that is closer to Godliness.”<sup>588</sup>

The establishment of the principle of justice would also eradicate many evil elements and problems in society and thus give the government more time to devote to taking care of the state’s development and welfare. But, if individuals fail to maintain justice, it becomes the government’s responsibility to interfere in order to establish and impose justice upon them as God said:

Verily, we have sent our Messengers with clear signs, and revealed with them the Book and Scale (of judgement) so that people may be firm in justice, and we provided iron, wherein is mighty power and many uses for mankind, and that God shall know who will help Him and His Messengers in the unseen.<sup>589</sup>

Interpreting this verse, Quṭb contended that it became the role of the messengers of God to establish justice among all human beings. In doing so, they were provided with the Book (*al-kitāb*) that they could refer to in solving problems facing them relating to laws and other religious duties. These messengers were also provided with a scale (*mīzān*), that became the only guarantee for all humankind from violent conduct or other feelings of uncertainty while struggling with their internal desires which were influencing them towards wrongful conduct. With these two divine guides, Quṭb held, humans would be guided in their struggle to administer justice throughout their lives. Without these two sources, they surely would lose their direction and stray far from divine guidance. Even if they were still well guided, such guidance would not remain for long since they had nothing to refer to when in need of it.<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:776.

<sup>589</sup> Qur’ān, 57:25.

<sup>590</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 6:3494.

In regard to the iron (*ḥadīd*) described in the verse Qutb, however, did not give a detailed elaboration on its meaning. Instead, he believed that the term *ḥadīd* was mentioned by God to show His all mighty power in bringing forth any means for the benefit of humankind. However, in the context of the current Muslims situation, Qutb saw that it might be possible to consider *ḥadīd* as meaning a struggle (*jihād*) on the part of Muslims with their wealth and personal life in putting God's command into practise and establishing justice in their social affairs.<sup>591</sup>

By examining the views of scholars like Ibn Taymiyya and al-Mawdūdī for instance, one will find that both had interpreted *ḥadīd* as a power to bring people to the right path. It is therefore a political power that can correct people so that they will be brought back to the guidance of God. As Ibn Taymiyya stated:

The aim of commissioning the Prophets and of revealing the Books, therefore, is to have people administer justice in the cause of God and in the rights of His creatures. Thus he who deviates from the Book shall be corrected by iron (force of arms).<sup>592</sup>

From the fact that political power becomes necessary in making people follow God's command, al-Mawdūdī saw that it is up to the Muslim authority to use any possible means which is thought to be appropriate to bring people to the right path.<sup>593</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, on the other hand, considered the use of force of arms as necessary in order to bring people back to the way of God. This force of arms, Ibn Taymiyya held, would only work once there is a proper leader who can give orders and organize a group of people who are ready to struggle for the sake of God.<sup>594</sup> This, again, means that the establishment of a government under the imamate leadership is vital before any other means of bringing people to the right path.

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<sup>591</sup> Qutb, *Zilāl*, 6:3495.

<sup>592</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya*, 41.

<sup>593</sup> Mawdūdī, *Islamic State*, 15.

<sup>594</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya*, 41–42.

## 5.4 Wealth and social equity

In the preceding discussion, we have mentioned Qutb's views on the necessity of establishing an Islamic state to bring God's command into practice. This includes the role of the *imām* or *khalīfa* in executing the *sharīʿa* laws in order to maintain justice and equality in human affairs. Qutb also discussed the significance of *shūrā* in the governmental system of Islam and how it became a means of finding a solution to the problems facing the Muslim *umma* as a whole, besides strengthening the relationship between the *imām* and the governed.

The following discussions will look into Qutb's notion of the economic system of Islam. His Islamic treatment of the subject of human economic affairs derives from the belief that Islam is a comprehensive system covering all aspects of human society. Therefore, any treatment of the social justice of Islam would not be complete without looking to the way in which Islam regards wealth and the suggested way of solving the economic crisis facing humankind as a whole and the Muslim people in particular.

### 5.4.1 Nature of wealth

Islam has provided an economic system for humankind that guarantees freedom of enterprise and private possession to its members. It is a system "not drawn in the light of arithmetical calculations and capacities of production alone. Rather, it is drawn and conceived in the light of a comprehensive system of morals and principles."<sup>595</sup>

In the teachings of Islam, God is the absolute owner of the Universe and whatever is in it. He is the Nourisher and the Master of all humankind. Only He can bestow upon them any rights of ownership and necessities in relation to wealth etc. In this regard, He can impose limitations and restrictions on their ownership, since everything belongs to Him alone. Man's power to dispose of worldly pleasures

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<sup>595</sup> Abdalati, *Islam in focus*, 127.

therefore derives from his role as vicegerent and trustee. Quṭb stated that since God is the Creator of the universe and all contained therein, the role of man is only to uphold the trust which God has conferred upon him as “vicegerent of man in the earth (*khalīfat al-insān fi'l-ard*).”<sup>596</sup> According to Quṭb, clarity on this question is vital as the human will soon realize that he is merely an agent appointed by God to administer His wealth in accordance with His *manhaj* and law.<sup>597</sup>

Quṭb held that the Islamic principles relating to wealth and its expenditure have a significant bearing on human behavior. They made every individual Muslim ready to spend in the way of God and to contribute to worthy causes. Also, it made him responsive to the needs of his surrounding community, ready to do his bit and fulfil his sacred mission.<sup>598</sup> It saves him from the pit-falls of selfishness, greed and injustice.<sup>599</sup> This can be seen in the obligation of *zakāt* and the prohibition of usury (*ribā*), as will be discussed in subsequent topics.

Since wealth and property, including all of humankind, belongs to One God, Quṭb maintained that the bounties of nature and worldly pleasures (wealth etc.) should be accessible to all humans. Therefore, any human transactions that end up with the monopoly of wealth among the rich are prohibited. Moreover, these transactions are also in contradiction with the Islamic principle of the unity of humankind which postulates that: anything God has vouchsafed to humans should not become confined to a particular group of people or a privileged class, but should be for all of humanity. For this reason, the management of wealth and other economic activities become part of the whole human social system, with inter-relation between them. Thus, any means that leads to the accumulation of wealth in

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<sup>596</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:318.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid., 1:318–319.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid., 1:318.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid., 1:319.



the hands of a few not only opposes the economic system prescribed, but also the goal of social organization (*al-tanzīm al-ijtimāʿī*) as a whole.<sup>600</sup>

At this point, Quṭb's ideas show that he tended to propagate the belief that whatever an individual Muslim possesses is not, in fact, his alone. Instead, all that he has is by way of trust, a 'trust' vouchsafed by God and all that is spent must be in accordance with His command and within the limits prescribed by Him. As verse 7 of *Sūra 57 (al-Ḥadīd)* states: "Believe in Allah and His apostle, and expend of that unto which He has made you stewards (*mustakhlaḥfīn fīhi*)."<sup>601</sup> Citing this verse, Quṭb argued that whatever individuals give or spend something is not theirs at all but the property of God. They act as trustees who give away what is due to others, fulfilling their duty according to the conditions imposed upon them by God.<sup>602</sup>

#### 5.4.2 Ways of spending

Having described briefly the fundamental concepts of wealth in Islam, we can turn to Quṭb's views with regard to ways of spending as required by Islam. According to him, verses 261-274 of *Sūra 2 (al-Baqāra)* have several important elements regarding the successful management of the economic system. In addition, the verses describe how the proper management of wealth can strengthen the sense of brotherhood and solidarity (*takāful*) among the Muslims.<sup>603</sup> The Qur'ān says:

The likeness of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, is as the likeness of a grain (of corn); it grows seven ears, and each ear has a hundred grains. Allah gives manifold increase to whom He wills. And Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All-Knower. Those who spend their wealth in the Cause of Allah, and do not follow up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury, their reward is with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3524.

<sup>601</sup> Qur'ān, 57:7.

<sup>602</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3482.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid., 1:304–305.

<sup>604</sup> Qur'ān, 2: 261–262.

According to Quṭb, the significance of the above verse stems from the fact that it is valid and applicable at all times and situations.<sup>605</sup> Moreover, the development of human life from one generation to another and the influence of Western ideologies penetrating the Muslim mind inevitably makes the verse important. This phenomenon has a great impact on the individual's soul. Thus, continual repetition by the Qur'ān on the subject of wealth and the nature of wealth in God's sight, aims to remind Muslims of their responsibilities, so that they will not deviate from the right path so easily in their pursuit of wealth.<sup>606</sup> In addition, the Qur'ān teaches them how wealth which is in their hands can lead to a profitable outcome<sup>607</sup> if properly managed in accordance with God's command.<sup>608</sup>

Quṭb saw that the major problem facing the Muslims of the Modern age, who were sometimes involved in unhealthy economic transactions, arose from their lack of a proper understanding of the concept of wealth and its expenditure as provided by their religion. For this reason, there has emerged a new notion that whatever individuals possess is theirs and they can, therefore, spend it as they please and invest it in ways that give them a profitable return. That is why there are people who feel no guilt, cheat in their business transactions and indulge in usury (*ribā*) when providing income for themselves. It is also no surprise to see people who spend their wealth by donating to the poor so that they might be seen as generous in the eyes of the public. They do not notice that such a donation is useless in the sight of God. All these types of expenditure might bring prosperity to the proprietor from one aspect but not the kind of prosperity which Islam seeks to achieve. Condemning these forms

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<sup>605</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:304.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid., 1:304–305.

<sup>607</sup> Profitable business here means the expenditure of wealth that gives profits to both proprietor and the recipient himself. By giving the wealth to others, it purifies the proprietor's souls from the feeling of selfishness, greediness and so on. With regard to the recipient, he will get benefits from such a wealth for his life. See Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:304.

<sup>608</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:304.

of expenditure, Quṭb argued that Islam has its own method of expenditure together with its own ethics (*ādāb*). It is this ethical value that turns the giving of charity (*ṣadaqa*) into a profitable activity for both the proprietor and the receiver. On the part of the proprietor, *ṣadaqa* trains his conscience to be free from greedy thoughts, selfishness etc. while those who receive the charity consider it useful for helping those in need.<sup>609</sup>

Quṭb was convinced that Islamic teaching with regard to ways of expenditure could solve the existing financial problems facing Muslims of the Modern age. Believing the Qur'ān to be a source of reference pertaining to human life, he argued that it is the Muslims' responsibility to repeat the golden age of the early Muslim generations who successfully established a society based on tolerance and co-operation amongst its members. These Muslims had made the Qur'ān their source of reference with whatever problems they faced.<sup>610</sup> Therefore, it becomes the task of Muslims of this generation to study the Qur'ān, observe its messages and follow its teachings because the way the Qur'ān instructs people of the past is the same, in the sense that it exposed to them the reality of wealth in God's sight, and how there is a huge reward for those who spend it in the way of God.<sup>611</sup> As a result, there emerged people like Abū Bakr, Uthmān and ʿAbd Raḥmān ibn ʿAuf who were well known for their generosity and for their spending of almost all of their property for the sake of God. They liberated slaves, contributed a large amount of wealth in *jihād* etc.

Besides that, Muslims have to maintain a clear perception of the concept of wealth as mentioned earlier, while they continually struggle against feelings of love for wealth itself. The Qur'ān reminds Muslims and encourages them to do good deeds and they (individual Muslims) are required to make every effort to understand and follow its message.

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<sup>609</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:304.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid., 1:305.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid., 1:305–306.



There must be a consciousness (within individual souls) that runs together with the Qur'ān which comes to guide them...What is required is that the individual Muslim has to turn back to the Qur'ān, to understand its messages in order to know what it requires him to do, as in the case of the first Muslim generation<sup>612</sup>

By doing so, a godly society, as exemplified by the first generation, can be established again by modern Muslim generations. Moreover, Muslims of the modern age are, in reality, those who continue with the tasks left behind by those of the early generation whose purpose in this world was to uphold God's messages as revealed in the Qur'ān. For this reason, Quṭb believed that as long as the Qur'ān is present, the door is always open for Muslims to establish a new society, based on the Qur'ān as its guidance and to correct their current economic crisis.<sup>613</sup>

It is a distinctive feature of the Qur'ān that it deals with the human conscience by taking into consideration the natural love for wealth and other worldly pleasures. For this reason, it does not detract from the value of wealth since wealth is one of the adornments of the present world.<sup>614</sup> According to Quṭb the Qur'anic method of teaching is interesting from the point of view that it begins by encouraging individuals to spend their wealth as part of their worship of God, since it is God's promise to reward for doing so. Though the verses relate to rules that need to be followed pertaining to the expenditure of wealth, it does not begin by placing people under obligation. Rather, people are urged to spend moderately, depending on their capability. In addition, examples of people doing good deeds and their rewards are mentioned to show how profitable such deeds are in human society. This undeniably

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<sup>612</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1: 305.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid.

<sup>614</sup> Verse 46 of *Sūra* 18 (*al-Kahf*) clearly mentions the value of wealth in human life when God said: "Wealth and children are the adornment of the present world but the abiding things, the deeds of righteousness, are better with Allah in reward, and better in hope."



has a great impact on the individual's conscience and thus successfully captivates his heart.<sup>615</sup>

It is important to notice that not all expenditures (*infāq*) are recognized by Islam. In fact, there are certain criteria which are required to be followed by Muslims in order to gain God's pleasure. This is mentioned clearly in the following verse:

Those who spend their wealth in the Cause of Allah, and do not follow up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury, their reward is with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.<sup>616</sup>

From the above verse, it is found that the moral aspects become the most important requirements in Islamic teaching. The Qur'ān does not probe into the amount of money or wealth spent but looks to the moral attributes of the proprietor or the benefactors. In this context, the good intention (*ḥusn al-niyya*) of the individuals is first taken into account.<sup>617</sup> For wealth which is spent for the sake of God with the intention (*niyya*) behind the spending not being the pursuit respect or the desire to be seen by others, there will be a reward from God.<sup>618</sup> Any types of spending which are out of personal interest and incur injury to the recipients, are not only useless but will lead to social destruction, as Caliph 'Umar once stated, "This is an example of a rich man who does good deeds out of obedience to Allah, and then Allah sends him Satan whereupon he commits sins till all his good deeds are lost."<sup>619</sup>

Moreover, such attitudes indicate clearly how wealth, which in reality belongs to God, has been exploited by certain groups of people for their own interests and manipulated for the oppression of the poor and needy. It thus again

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<sup>615</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:306.

<sup>616</sup> Qur'ān, 2:262.

<sup>617</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:313.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid., 1:315.

<sup>619</sup> Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Lahore: Kazi Publications, n.d.), 6:48.

contradicts the objective of spending which Islam seeks to achieve; that is, to create a sense of brotherhood and solidarity (*takāful*) among the rich and the poor in society.<sup>620</sup>

At this point, one can see how Islam places great concern on wealth and the expenditure of wealth, since they constitute important elements in realizing a just society whose members co-operate with one another with a sense of brotherhood and responsibility towards each other. The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said, "Mankind are Allah's dependants, all of them, so the most beloved of them in the sight of Allah are those who are most beneficent to His people."<sup>621</sup>

Research scholars in the field of behavioral psychology, however, are of the opinion that the concept of expenditure (*infāq*) as propounded by Islam, where the rich are required to spend what is beyond their necessity on the poor and the needy, to some extent leads to emotional conflict for the recipients. In this context, they (the recipients) will always experience a feeling of weakness and inferiority before the rich and will possibly make efforts to be more superior to them. This phenomenon sooner or later leads to class struggles in the society.<sup>622</sup> Rejecting this view, Quṭb contended that the class struggle only existed in a society that had lost its faith in God. He further maintained:

this might be true in the societies of ignorance (*al-mujtama'āt al-jāhiliyyāt*), they are societies without the spirit (*al-rūḥ*) of Islam and are not ruled by Islam. As for this religion, the problem will be solved from another angle. Islam instils in the individuals a feeling that wealth belongs to Allah. The wealth that is in the hands of the proprietors is Allah's wealth. This is the reality that requires no argument except from those who know-nothing about the nature of wealth.<sup>623</sup>

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<sup>620</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:307.

<sup>621</sup> Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh Tabrizi, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* (Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1961) 2:613.

<sup>622</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:307.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid.

Looking to Quṭb's argument on wealth, it seems that he in no way contradicts the Islamic concept of property as a whole. His ideas on and analysis of the function of wealth in strengthening the relationship between the rich and the poor lies firmly within the Islamic framework. For a clear example of this, let us look to the institution of *zakāt* and its contribution to Muslim society. Here, one can see Quṭb's ideas at work. As for the objective of the institution of *zakāt* and its obligation, it not only purifies the property of the contributor but also purifies his heart from selfishness and greed. In return, it purifies the heart of the recipient from uneasiness, envy and jealousy. It fosters goodwill in his heart and warm wishes for the contributor. As a result, society at large will purify and free itself from class warfare, ill feelings, distrust and corruption.<sup>624</sup>

Despite encouraging individual Muslims to spend their wealth in the way of God, Quṭb contended that Islam sets certain rules and conditions for doing so. This means that proprietors have no right to spend their money or handle their possessions in whatever way they please. Indeed, they are always reminded of the fact that God is the Real Provider and Actual Possessor.<sup>625</sup>

The declaration regarding rules of expenditure is clearly stated in Qur'ān in verses 26-30 of *Sūra 17 (al-Isrā')* when God said:

And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those who want, and to the wayfarer. But squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift. Verily, spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones, and the Evil One is to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful.

God further states:

Make not your hand tied (like a niggard's) to our neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like a foolish spendthrift); lest you become rebuked and destitute. Verily your Lord does provide sustenance in abundance for whom

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<sup>624</sup> Abdalati, *Islam in Focus*, 95–96.

<sup>625</sup> Detailed discussion on individual ownership will follow in the subsequent topic.

He please, and He provides in a just measure. For He does know and regard all His servants.

According to Quṭb, the above verses provide rules pertaining to the spending of wealth. How much wealth is spent is not the point. The most important thing is spending (*infāq*) in accordance with God's command and fulfilling the real purpose of existence in this world which is the true worship of God.<sup>626</sup> This includes the rights of kinsman, the poor, and the wayfarer whose needs are to be fulfilled by the rich. In other words, these indigents and needy have a share in what is possessed within lawful boundaries.

For the meaning of spendthrift in these verses, Quṭb quoted a definition given by Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās, that is "any type of spending which is not in the right way."<sup>627</sup> This might include wealth which is spent in a large or small amount on what God has prohibited, for example alcoholic beverages, drugs, gold and silver utensils or it might include the squandering it on things which are of no benefit either to oneself or others. Quṭb held, however, that if the money is used wholly in the right way, the spender is not to be considered in the category of spendthrift since the purpose of his spending is for the sake of God. Quṭb based his argument on Mujāhid's who stated: "If a man spends all his possession in the right way, he is not regarded as a spendthrift. But if he spends even a half bushel (of the possession) in a wrong way, he is a spendthrift."<sup>628</sup>

From one angle, Quṭb's view seems to be in contradiction with the view given by modern scholars like al-Qaraḍāwī<sup>629</sup> for example. According to the latter,

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<sup>626</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 4:2222.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Born in 1926, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī grew up in a religious family background. He graduated from al-Azhar University in Cairo and later became one of the leading Azharite scholars. He joined the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn during his primary education in his hometown, Tanṭā. Al-Qaraḍāwī's affiliation with the Ikhwān led to his detention several times in 1949, the period from 1954 to 1956 and in 1962. He authored more than forty books such as *al-Ḥalāl wa'l-Ḥarām fi'l-Islām* (1960), *Fiqh al-Zakāt* (1969) and *al-Ṣaḥwa al-Islāmiyya bayna al-Juhūd wa'l-Taṭarruf* (1984).



giving away so much in charity that one has nothing left for the necessities of life also constitutes wasting of wealth.<sup>630</sup> Al-Qaradāwī's opinion is based on several *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (pbuh) among which the Prophet is reported to have said, "The best charity is that which leaves you self-sufficient."<sup>631</sup> In another instance, Jābir bin ʿAbdullah narrated:

Once when we were with the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), a man came with a lump of gold as large as an egg and said, "O Messenger of Allah, take it as charity; by Allah, this is all I possess." The Prophet (pbuh) turned away from him. The man came around in front of the Prophet (pbuh), whereupon the Prophet (pbuh) said angrily, "Give it to me," and taking the piece of gold from him threw it toward him in such a way that, had it hit him, it would have been painful to him. He then said, "One of you brings me his wealth while he possesses nothing else, and then he sits down and begs from people. Charity is that which leaves you self-sufficient. Take this back; we have no need of it."<sup>632</sup>

Nevertheless, a clear explanation of this is important in order to avoid any confusion. In fact, Quṭb's viewpoints and arguments on wealth and its expenditure are neither contradictory to al-Qaradāwī's opinion nor to the Prophet's *ḥadīth* mentioned earlier. Rather, his statements included a quotation of Mujāhid's view, referring mainly to the wasteful spending of wealth. Since wastefulness and extravagance in spending are prohibited in Islam, Quṭb held that it is the Muslims responsibility to fight this and eliminate the existence of such spending totally. In this regard, Quṭb maintained that the spending of the whole of one's property in the right way is better than any extravagance. He therefore illustrated how Islam takes a very hateful stance on such spendthrift attitudes. In terms of the spending limit, he had a similar view to al-Qaradāwī as is clearly manifested in the following statement:

<sup>630</sup> Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, *The Lawful and The Prohibited in Islam*, trans. Kamal El-Helbawy, M. Moinuddin Siddiqui and Syed Shukry (Kuwait: Salimiah, 1993), 333.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid., 334.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

“Anything (wealth) that is beyond the (standard) individual necessity, not including that which contributes to a luxurious life-style, is permissible for spending.”<sup>633</sup>

This is the way Islam looks at wealth and how it needs to be managed in accordance with God’s rules. Both misers and spendthrifts of wealth are regarded as weak-minded persons who do not really understand the true nature of wealth and thus do not spend it in the proper way. For this reason, Quṭb held, Islam puts much emphasis on the proper management of wealth, giving the community the right to manage the properties of individuals who squander their possessions. The Qur’ān has stressed this by saying:

Do not give your wealth, which Allah has made a means of support for you, to the weak-minded, but feed and clothe them from it and speak to them words of kindness.<sup>634</sup>

This verse clearly shows how God refers to the wealth of the weak-minded as “your wealth,” since the wealth of the individual is also the wealth of the Muslims community as a whole.

Interpreting the above verse, Quṭb believed that lack of understanding of the role of wealth and its function is one of the major problems resulting in the destruction of the Muslim society, since wealth itself was circulated among the rich who ignored the rights of the poor and needy who were entitled to have a share of it. As a result, it detracted from the real objective of wealth, that of a means of establishing a just society based on solidarity and cooperation between its members.

#### 5.4.3 Ownership in Islam (*al-mulkiyya al fardiyya*)

As mentioned before, the purpose of the economic system set out by Islam is to create a just society that stands against all kinds of exploitation and oppression

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<sup>633</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:231.

<sup>634</sup> Qur’ān, 4:5.

among its members. In this context, the existence of the system makes sure that every single aspect of human transactions is in accordance with God's rules. Thus, no one has full rights over his possessions since these belong to God alone.

Despite the rules and regulations imposed upon individual Muslims pertaining to their management of wealth, Islam does recognize private ownership (*mulkiyya fardiyya*). This means that whatever the individual makes or earns through lawful means is regarded as his own possession and is sacred. Any violation of it, whether secret or open, is prohibited. According to Quṭb, the right to property which Islam has permitted to the individual is a "trust"<sup>635</sup> which requires fulfillment in a way recognized by the *sharīʿa*. In this regard, though the individual has a right to enjoy his possessions he is still bound by some limitations and conditions, especially in relation to its acquisition (*wasīlat al-tamalluk*), development (*wasīlat al-tanmiyya*) and expenditure (*wasīlat al-infāq*).<sup>636</sup> Without such limitations, Quṭb believed that people would be easily influenced by their own desires and thus involved themselves in wasteful spendings.

As for the acquisition of wealth by the private individual Quṭb, like other Muslim scholars, maintained that it must be through means recognized by the *sharīʿa*. He outlined several means of acquisition which Islam has permitted, such as securing possession of unowned uncultivated land and making it cultivable, hunting, inheritance, commerce, working for another for a wage, etc. Apart from these limitations on property rights, the owner must also be competent enough to exercise his rights of control. According to Quṭb, if the owner is capable of fulfilling the conditions which Islam has imposed on him, his possessions are sacred and no one

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<sup>635</sup> Quṭb's idea on this derives from his view on the man's role as the vicegerent and trustee in relation to the wealth which is in reality belongs to God. In this regard, He can bestow upon humankind any rights of ownership and impose any limitations and restrictions on their ownership. See Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla*, 94–95.

<sup>636</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:585.

can violate his rights. If not, he is no longer a trustee of the wealth and the right of ownership returns back to the community or Muslim *umma*.

For man is virtually the community's agent in relation to his property and that his tenure of it is more like employment than ownership, and that ownership in general is fundamentally the right of the community and that the community has this as a delegation (*mustakhlafah fīhi*) from God, Who is the only true owner of anything.<sup>637</sup>

Quṭb included the weak-minded (*al-sufahā'*) who squander their wealth and the orphans under the category of those who need special attention from the community. This is because the properties which are in their hands, in reality, belong to the Muslim *umma* as a whole. They are only given rights to it in order that wealth can be in constant circulation and not accumulated in the hands of a few. In that way, the greater would be the degree of prosperity in society. However, if they are incapable of making use of their wealth in the right way, Quṭb held that the wealth must be returned to members of the community who will take responsibility for it. With regard to this situation, priority is given to those having family ties with the orphan.<sup>638</sup>

Quṭb's treatment showed that he tended to regard the ownership of property as a social function too. In addition, he described how Islam treated the question of private ownership by considering the individuals' problem as the community's problem: all members have to co-operate with one another in solving it. Quṭb's argument is based on verse 5 of *Sūra* 4 (*Al-Nisā'*) when God said:

Do not give your wealth, which Allah has made a means of support for you, to the weak-minded, but feed and clothe them from it and speak to them words of kindness.

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<sup>637</sup> Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla*, 129.

<sup>638</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:585.



With regard to the way of managing the weak-minded and orphan's property

God said:

And try orphans (as regards their intelligence) until they reach the age of marriage; if then you find sound judgement in them, release their property to them, but consume it not wastefully, and hastily fearing that they should grow up, and whoever (amongst guardians) is rich, he should take no wages, but if he poor, let him have for himself what is just and reasonable (according to his labour). And when you release their property to them take witness in their presence; and Allah is All-Sufficient in taking account.<sup>639</sup>

It is important to note that the community's right to the individual's wealth as enunciated by Quṭb here is not a new issue nor a manifestation of the communist ideology, as one may assume. Rather, it runs along side the Islamic economic principles that aim to establish a society whose members co-operate with one another. Al-Qaraḍāwī stated that the reason for giving the Muslim community a right to manage the properties of the weak-minded is in line with Islam as the religion of justice and moderation.<sup>640</sup> Moreover, God will not let His wealth be managed by those who have no skill in controlling the wealth and spend it wastefully. They are in contradiction to His command: "Do not give your wealth, which Allah has made a means of support for you, to the weak-minded." As for the weak-minded, they not only squander their wealth but, to some extent, spend it as they please on what God has prohibited. As a result, the wealth is of no benefit to the owner or to others.<sup>641</sup> In another instance, Quṭb held that the community's right to individual's possessions is one means to combat extravagant spending and more importantly makes sure that God's wealth is not retained by a particular group of people, circulating only between them, with the rest having no access to it.<sup>642</sup>

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<sup>639</sup> Qur'ān, 4:6.

<sup>640</sup> Qaraḍāwī, *The Lawful and the prohibited in Islam*, 333.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid.

<sup>642</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3524–3525.

According to Quṭb, the way Islam establishes this concept (ownership of wealth), is not based on the individual's status or sex. Every individual has rights to the possessions they have acquired through lawful means. This means that men and women have the same rights to wealth without any discrimination. In the past this phenomenon would not happen, since women had no place in society. They were transferred from one person to another like goods in the Arab society of the *jāhili* period. Nevertheless, Quṭb maintained that the seeds of a *jāhili* society still exist in the modern era when womens' rights have been put aside as a sign of respect given to men. The transference of the entire property into the hands of the first son in the case of the parents' death, and the requirement of the husband's permission, even in transactions involving the women's own wealth, are among the phenomenon that clearly eliminate womens' rights.

Islam, Quṭb argued, gives full respect to women by considering whatever they earn through lawful means as theirs. Other's interference, including the husbands' interference with their possession, is prohibited except in the case permission granted by the owner to do so. Quṭb viewed verse 229 of *Sūra 2 (al-Baqāra)* having a clear explanation on this issue when God said:

And it is not lawful for you (men) to take back (from your wives) any of your *Mahr* (bridal-money given by the husband to his wife at the time of marriage) which you have given them.

Therefore, if the husband is forbidden from taking back anything which he has given as a gift to his wife, it becomes more inappropriate for him to take whatever belongs to the wife (which is acquired through her own works).<sup>643</sup>

This is the way Islam treats the question of wealth. Despite some limitations imposed in the management of wealth, Islam acknowledges man's nature and his necessities. In this regard, it does not require what is beyond one's capacity. The

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<sup>643</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:646.

basic principle is justice for all members of society in terms of opportunity to get access to God's wealth. For this reason, Islam's stance is one of repugnance if wealth is circulated exclusively amongst a particular group of people.

Quṭb laid down several characteristics making Islam distinct from other systems and ideologies in relation to the management of wealth. Firstly, it is the only system from God. Secondly, it is the only system that takes into account the spiritual and material needs of the human being. In other words, it balances such aspects as spiritual and material needs, individual and community rights, and the contributor and the recipient's rights with regard to financial transactions. Thirdly, it is a just system in harmony with natural human instincts. Fourthly, it is the only system that runs in harmony with the nature of the existence of the universe.<sup>644</sup>

According to Quṭb, such characteristics would not even be found in the capitalist system since capitalism depends more on usury (*ribā*) and monopoly (*iḥtikār*) transactions for its survival.<sup>645</sup> There are some modern scholars who agree with Quṭb's opinions. In comparing both the Islamic and capitalist view on the concept of private ownership, ʿUlwān, a contemporary scholar from Saudi Arabia, concluded that the free market economy run by the capitalist system, will create class divisions since the capitalists only know how to feed themselves and are unconscious of the necessities of fellow members.<sup>646</sup> More precisely, the system will cause each of its members to be a victim of uncertainty and thus lead to exploitation of one particular group of another. This is because each member wants more and more money, more and more means with which to acquire more and more wealth. Islam, on the other hand, permits a right to private ownership on the basis that every individual is encouraged to work and has authority to earn, invest and spend. Yet in

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<sup>644</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 6:3525.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid.

<sup>646</sup> ʿUlwān, *al-Takāful al-Ijtimāʿī fī l-Islām*, 26.

doing so, he is guided by the limitations set by God in order to save him from going astray.<sup>647</sup>

#### 5.4.4 The *Zakāt* Institution

##### 5.4.4.1 The obligation of *zakāt*

As mentioned earlier, Islam has provided certain rules regarding wealth and its expenditure. For this reason, one is no longer free to spend his possessions as he pleases since there is the community's right to take into consideration. This requires his attention in order to maintain the balance of opportunity and right to God's wealth.

In the preceding discussion, we also discussed nature and types of spending (*infāq*) for the God's sake, including obligatory alms and voluntary alms known as *zakāt* and *ṣadaqa*, and how Islam emphasises these since they lead to great reward from God.

Here, the discussion will focus on Quṭb's views on *zakāt* and its contribution to creating an ideal society whereby every member of the society co-operates and helps each other on the basis of the belief that all wealth belongs to God and should not be circulated among a certain group of people with the rest having no access to it. This has been explained by Quṭb saying that, "God is the Owner of wealth, Who gives man a right to ownership with conditions among which is giving ( *itā'* ) a *zakāt* payment."<sup>648</sup>

According to Quṭb, *zakāt* constituted one of the five pillars of Islam. Therefore, any individual Muslim who reached a certain stage<sup>649</sup> in his life and

<sup>647</sup> ʿUlwān, *al-Takāful al-Ijtimāʿī fī l-Islām*, 28.

<sup>648</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:161.

<sup>649</sup> In general the Muslim jurists (Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī, Mālikī and Ḥanbalī) agreed that *zakāt* is obligated on those who are Muslim, *balīgh* (sexually mature), *ʿāqil* (rational), freeman and having possession which, at the end of the year, exceeds the certain limit fixed by the local authority. See ʿAbdullāh Nāṣiḥ ʿUlwān, *Aḥkām al-Zakāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Salām li'l-Ṭibāʿa wa'l-Nashr, 1986), 11–16.



whose property remained in his possession for one complete year and reached a certain limit (termed *niṣāb* in Islamic jurisprudence), was obliged to pay *zakāt* to its due recipients, stipulated by the Qur'ān.<sup>650</sup> The Qur'ān states:

The alms (*zakāt*) are only for the poor, and the needy, and those who collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the captives, and the debtors, and for the cause of Allah, and for the wayfarer; a duty imposed by Allah.<sup>651</sup>

For this reason, any withholding of *zakāt* is heresy and unbelief.<sup>652</sup>

Quṭb defined *zakāt* as literally meaning “purity” (*tahāra*). It purifies both the heart and property of the proprietor. It purifies his heart from niggardliness and greed and his property from any unlawful retain or pursuits. This means that by paying *zakāt*, where a certain percentage of the individual's wealth has been distributed to its due beneficiaries, the remaining portions of his property will become permitted (*ḥalāl*) and pure, nobody can claim his right on them unless in a state of necessity (*ḥālāt al-ḍarūra*).<sup>653</sup> In technical terms, *zakāt* is a fulfilment (*wafā'*) of the social duty which God has made an obligatory claim on the property of the wealthy in favour of the poor.<sup>654</sup> In another instance, Quṭb said *zakāt* is also a right ordained by virtue of the *sharī'a*, applied to possessions according to a specific accounting. Anyone, for instance, who at the end of the year is in possession of approximately

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<sup>650</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:312.

<sup>651</sup> Qur'ān, 9:60.

<sup>652</sup> It did happen during Caliph Abū Bakr's time when he said regarding those refusing to pay *zakāt*: “I swear by Allah that if they were to refuse me a female kid (sheep or camel or cow) which they used to pay to God's Messenger, I would fight with them over the refusal of it.” See Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. M. Ludolf Krehl (Leiden: Brill, 1862), 354.

<sup>653</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 4:2455.

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:161.

twenty pounds (Egyptian pound in Quṭb's day) or more, is obligated to pay *zakāt* at the rate of two and one-half percent.<sup>655</sup>

Quṭb's definitions were similar to that of the traditional scholars' view. Al-Ṭabarī (d.923), when interpreting verse 103 of *Sūra 9 (al-Tawba)*, viewed *zakāt* as a means of purity, saying that despite the Qur'anic injunction on the enforcement of *zakāt* in the Muslim society, there are another important aspects resulting from its obligation, such as purification of the Muslim heart from the dirtiness of sin and the raising of him from the vile attitudes of hypocrites to the ranks of those who are sincere and honest in their deeds.<sup>656</sup>

At this point, the only thing which differentiates *zakāt* from other voluntary alms (*ṣadaqa* etc.) is its obligation upon individual Muslims who are well off (*al-qādirūn*), possessing the specific amount as mentioned above. The latter is merely a voluntary contribution from someone to someone else, without any obligation or specific time.<sup>657</sup>

*Zakāt* was made an obligatory duty in the second year of *Hijra*, just after the establishment of the Islamic State in Medina. According to Quṭb, although it became obligatory during the early Medinan phase of the Prophet's *da'wa* mission, *zakāt*'s significance had already been mentioned by the Qur'ān during the Meccan phase.<sup>658</sup> Verse 7 of *Sūra 41 (Fuṣṣilāt)* for example, clarifies this when God said, "Those who give not the *zakāt* and they are disbelievers in the hereafter."

In interpreting this verse, Quṭb held the view that the word *zakāt* meant a social duty and was applicable to all time. Though *zakāt* as described in this verse was not yet imposed in Mecca as an obligation, its importance had already been stated by the Qur'ān to the new Muslim converts at Mecca. They had been exposed

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<sup>655</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 3:1669.

<sup>656</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 6:463.

<sup>657</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:319.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:3109.

to such a term as a voluntary contribution entrusted to human conscience without any accounting. It was however at Medina that *zakāt* had been made an obligatory duty upon every Muslim with a detailed explanation as to its obligation, including its specific beneficiaries.<sup>659</sup>

At this point, one discovers that the way Islam treats the human conscience and interest in its social and economic system began in the Meccan era. Though its treatment was in terms of encouragement for voluntary expenditure rather than in terms of force, its impact was inevitably great upon the individual's conscience, especially after the establishment of the Islamic State in Medina, where most of God's injunctions were gradually revealed. Quṭb admitted the reality of this when he saw that most of the Qur'anic verses revealed in Mecca, despite their emphasis on *‘aqīdat al-tawḥīd*, aimed at cleansing the human conscience, from aspects of greed and covetousness of wealth. He therefore, saw that verses 24 and 25 of *Sūra 70 (al-Ma‘ārij)* and verse 7 of *Sūra 41 (Fuṣṣilāt)* having two aims, firstly to purify Muslims' hearts from the above aspects and secondly to distinguish Islamic social and economic transactions from the usurious transactions that were spread widely among the Quraysh people (of that time).<sup>660</sup>

The significance of *zakāt* also stems from the fact that its obligation had already being imposed as the principle ordinance of the religion of every Prophet before Islam. The Qur'ān clearly describes how *zakāt* had been enjoined on the Prophet Jesus (‘Īsā), when the Jesus said to his people: “And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me *Ṣalāt* (prayer), and *Zakāt*, as long as I live.”<sup>661</sup> In interpreting this verse 31 of *Sūra 19 (Maryam)*, Quṭb maintained that the obligation of *zakāt* upon the Prophet Jesus. (pbuh) clearly indicated that God's

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<sup>659</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 5:3109.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid., 5:3111.

<sup>661</sup> Qur'ān, 19:31. Of Prophet Abraham, it is in the Qur'ān, 21:7273. Prophet Ismā‘īl is also spoken of a giving the same commandment to his followers, Qur'ān, 19:55–56. Prophet Moses also received such a commandment as described in the Qur'ān 7:157; and 5:12.

messengers were enjoined with a similar message: total submission (*ʿubūdiyya*) to God which includes the performing of prayer (*ṣalāt*), and the paying *zakāt*.<sup>662</sup>

It is interesting to note that, Quṭb, in his treatment on *zakāt*, had put more emphasis on aspects of the training of the individual's conscience than on how to make people pay *zakāt* through the enforcement of *sharīʿa* laws etc. In other words, he saw that in order to call people to their religious duty, it was appropriate to give a proper explanation first, of the significance of *zakāt* and its benefits to both the payer and the recipient. In his view, the enforcement of laws would only be necessary once it was established that the first means was still unable to attract people to this religious duty. This can be seen from his view-point when interpreting verse 12 of *Sūra 5 (al-Mā'ida)* in which God said:

Indeed Allah took the covenant from the Children of Israel (Jews), and We appointed twelve leaders among them. And Allah said: "I am with you if you perform prayer (*ṣalāt*) and give *zakāt* and believe in My Messengers; honour and assist them, and lend a good loan to Allah, verily, I will expiate your sins and admit you to Gardens under which rivers flow (in Paradise).

In interpreting the words "if you perform *salāt* and give *zakāt*", scholars like al-Ṭabarī,<sup>663</sup> and Rashīd Riḍā<sup>664</sup> took the view that they relate to the obligation of *zakāt* which God has imposed upon the Muslim *umma* as a whole in the sense that they must take from their wealth or property when paying *zakāt* in order that the payment will purify their heart from greed and miserliness. Quṭb on the other hand, saw that to "give *zakāt*" in the above verse referred to one's obedience to God and his recognition of God's bounty (*niʿma*) bestowed upon him. One knows that the property in one's hand is merely a trust from God that needs to be properly managed and spent, which includes paying *zakāt* to those eligible for it. In so doing, solidarity

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<sup>662</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 4:2308.

<sup>663</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 4:492.

<sup>664</sup> Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Hakīm*, 6:280.



and brotherhood among Muslims will be strengthened and economic disparity can be solved.<sup>665</sup>

Arguing the significance of *zakāt* and its benefits upon individual Muslims, Quṭb further contended that there was a great reward from God to those who fulfill such a religious duty. For this reason, any individual Muslims who performed this social duty, with a feeling that it is part of his responsibility towards his fellow Muslims and fulfilling his religious ordinance, God will bestow upon him a great reward.<sup>666</sup> More importantly, he will be ranked among those who are successful in their lives.<sup>667</sup> Quṭb further held the view that the most important success of human life in this world is his success against Satan's temptation and his confidence (*thīqa*) in God's promise and rewards on whatever good deeds done in this world.<sup>668</sup>

According to Quṭb, history had shown that only those people who sacrificed their energy and wealth for the God's sake would be successful in their lives. In this regard, a real success in Muslim life does not necessarily means his success of accumulating and gaining wealth as much as he can, but his success in the sense that he is able to get rid of feelings of stinginess and superiority from manipulating his souls. Interpreting verse 24 and 25 of *Sūra* 70 (*al-Ma'ārij*), Quṭb describes these people as those having a feeling that whatever property in their possession is God's wealth which need to be distributed among its beneficiaries. In this regard, they have allotted a certain amount of wealth to the beggar and those whose means of living has been straitened.<sup>669</sup>

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<sup>665</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:858.

<sup>666</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:307.

<sup>667</sup> In *Sūra al-Mu'minūn*, God has promised with a successful endings for His servants who obey His command. See Qur'ān, 23:1–11.

<sup>668</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 4:2455.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:3699–3700.

#### 5.4.4.2 Property on which *zakāt* is payable and its rate

In Quṭb's view, though commands concerning *zakāt* were revealed during the Meccan phase, details of its significance and obligation were only given after the establishment of the Islamic State in Medina.<sup>670</sup>

As mentioned earlier, *zakāt* is imposed only on individual Muslims who, at the end of the year, are in possession of a property which has reached its *niṣāb*. In this regard, he must give *zakāt* at the minimum rate of two and one-half percent. Quṭb however held that in a time of *ḍarūrat* (necessities), such amounts would differ.<sup>671</sup>

According to Quṭb, the main prescriptions regarding *zakāt* are as follows. Only Muslims pay *zakāt* and on the following kinds of property:

1. field crops which are planted for food;
2. fruits, grapes and dates which are particularly mentioned in the Prophet's *ahādīth*;
3. animals like camels, cattle, sheep, and goats;
4. gold and silver; and
5. merchandise.

These prescriptions are in accordance with the Shafiite school. The rate for these properties will differ according to the type of property.<sup>672</sup> Generally this will be on the following basis; *zakāt* on crops, i.e, tithe (*ʿushr*) or half of the tithe (*niṣf al-ʿushr*) collected from crops and fruits.<sup>673</sup> Since these are seasonal, *zakāt* is only paid at the time of harvest. *Zakāt* on animals is payable based on their monetary value. *Zakāt* on

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<sup>670</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 5:3109.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., 4:2355.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid., 3:1669.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid., 1:310.

merchandise is estimated in terms of gold and silver and there is also *zakāt* on the two precious metals, gold and silver.<sup>674</sup>

Since *zakāt* is a social duty, Quṭb maintained that the state which implements the *sharīʿa* laws must play its role in collecting *zakāt* from those who are well off based on the rates mentioned and must also ensure that the laws are enforced. Besides *zakāt*, Quṭb held that the state could also impose new taxes if they thought that such taxation could contribute towards maintaining the welfare of all the members of society.<sup>675</sup>

However, Quṭb's opinion here seems to be in contradiction with one of his other statements in which he said that after payment of *zakāt*, a man has no monetary obligations to the state, and the state has no right to charge any new amount except under the necessities condition (*ḍarūrat*).<sup>676</sup> The issue of whether the state can impose new taxes above *zakāt* is a very controversial one and there are different opinions from the classical scholars regarding it. This is because these scholars (al-Māwardī and Ibn Taymiyya for instance) take a different view with regard to one of the Prophet's *aḥādīth* which states: "There is no right to a person's wealth other than the *zakāt*." Quoting this *ḥadīth*, al-Māwardī disputed that there are financial obligations upon Muslims other than *zakāt*.<sup>677</sup> His view was in contradiction to Ibn Taymiyya, who adopted the view that there are obligations other than *zakāt*. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the state may impose other financial obligations upon Muslims apart from *zakāt*. His opinion was clearly manifested in the following statement: "People should help each other in matters of food, clothing and shelter;

<sup>674</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:329. See also 1:310.

<sup>675</sup> Ibid., 1:316–318.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid., 4:2455.

<sup>677</sup> Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya*, 134.

and the state authority should take this responsibility and he can oblige them to do it.”<sup>678</sup>

It seems at this point that Qutb’s stance lies between these two extremes (al-Māwardī and Ibn Taymiyya). He considered that it was the duty of the state to strive for the economic progress of the people, provide social security and reduce disparities in the distribution of the public wealth. In his view, only the state which implements the *sharīʿa* law has the right to impose any new form of social duty upon its members. Such an enforcement must be for the welfare (*maṣlaḥa*) of the whole nation (*umma*) and must not be in contradiction with the basic Islamic principle, “wealth should not circulate among a certain group of people while the rest have no access to it.”<sup>679</sup>

#### 5.4.4.3 Those eligible for receiving *zakāt*

The Qur’ān clearly classifies the recipients of *zakāt* as follows:

As *ṣadaqāt* are only for the *Fuqarāʾ* (poor), and *al-Masākīn* (needy), and the officials appointed over them, and those whose hearts are made to incline to truth (towards Islam), and captives, and those in debt, and in the way of Allah, and the way-farer; an ordinance from Allah, and Allah is All-Knower, All-Wise.<sup>680</sup>

Here, although the verse begins with the word *ṣadaqāt*, in the context of the rest of its discussion it is clear that *zakāt* is being discussed. At the end of the verse, God clearly states that what is said is an ordinance from Him and thus a direct responsibility to Him is implied.

<sup>678</sup> Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām* (Riyadh: Maṭābiʿ al-Riyād, 1963), 29:194.

<sup>679</sup> Qutb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:858–859.

<sup>680</sup> Qur’ān, 9:60.



In interpreting this verse, Quṭb reminds Muslims not to question the distribution of *zakāt* to those mentioned recipients since it is an ordinance from God Who is knowing and Wise.<sup>681</sup> In this regard, neither the Prophet (pbuh) nor the owner of wealth himself has the right to choose anyone he pleases for receiving *zakāt*, as it is a Divine injunction that requires its implementation according to His commands.<sup>682</sup>

The recipient of *zakāt* is one who has nothing to meet his daily necessities as a result of his weakness or inability to work and make some earnings. For this reason, *zakāt* is not distributed to the rich and those who are capable of working or making sufficient earnings for their basic needs. Quṭb cited the Prophet's *hadīth* where the Prophet is reported to have said (to his companions coming to him asking for their share from *zakāt*): "If both of you are in need of it, I will distribute it (to both of you) and there is no share for the rich and those who are capable of making a living."<sup>683</sup>

According to Quṭb, there are, however, certain circumstances in which *zakāt* is payable to these people, such as in case of those who are stranded (during their travel) in a foreign land and are in need of help to go back to their home.<sup>684</sup> Here,

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<sup>681</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 3:1668. With regard to the distribution of *zakāt*, there is a tradition narrated by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī. During the Prophet's time, when a group of people negated the way *zakāt* was distributed by the Prophet. One of them openly called for a distributive justice by saying, "O Messenger of Allah! Let there be justice". The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Woe to you! Am I not of all the people of the earth the most entitled to fear Allah?" Then that man went away. Khalīd bin al-Walīd said, "O Messenger of Allah! Shall I chop his neck off?" The Prophet (pbuh) said, "No, may be he offers prayers." Khalīd said, "Numerous are those who offer prayers and say by their tongues what is not in their hearts." The Prophet (pbuh) said, "I have not been ordered (by Allah) to search the heart of the people or cut open their bellies". See Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5:448. See also Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 3:1667.

<sup>682</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 3:1668.

<sup>683</sup> Narrated by Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī. See Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 3:1669.

<sup>684</sup> All four schools of law (Shafīi, Maliki, Hanafī and Hambalī) agreed that the due recipients of *zakāt* include those who are employed to collect *zakāt*, the new Muslim convert, those who are struggling in God's cause and Muslim travellers who are stranded in a foreign land, even if any of them are rich. See 'Ulwān, *Aḥkām al-Zakāt*, 72-73.

Islam permits them to be among the due recipients even though they are rich and have sufficient wealth for life.<sup>685</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the principle set by Islam in regard to wealth is that it should not circulate only among the rich while the rest have no access to it. For this reason, the institution of *zakāt* is found to be one of the means of eradicating such a phenomenon. Giving the poor a priority over the rest in receiving *zakāt*, not only eradicates poverty but, at the same time, lets the wealth be kept in constant circulation. The more the wealth or money in circulation, the greater the degree of prosperity is. Quṭb had also noted in *al-ʿAdāla* that:

the existence of wealth in the hands of a larger number causes this wealth to be spent on the necessities of life of this large number so that the demand for goods increases and from this arises greater production and this results in full packets for the workers. Thus the wheel of life, work, production and consumption makes its natural and fruitful circuit.<sup>686</sup>

With regard to the Qur’anic classification of the due recipient where the poor and needy are put in the first place over the rest, Quṭb believed, there is a great reason behind this which can only be understood within the context of human life itself. He further contended that it is a natural process for an individual to pay *zakāt* at the end of a certain year while in the following year to be among the due recipients of *zakāt* as a result of specific reasons such as having possessions less than the statutory amount for *zakāt* or being involved in debt. In this context, *zakāt* acts as a social assurance for them in order to free them from such pressing situations.

At this point, the function of *zakāt* is not only to give the deprived (*ʿājjiz*) a right to share in the wealth of those who are well off (*al-qādirīn*), but in a wider sense, it acts as a social guarantee or insurance in case of unexpected circumstances

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<sup>685</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 3:1670.

<sup>686</sup> Quṭb, *al-ʿAdāla*, 110–111.

causing members of the society to be in need of financial assistance in order to relieve their distress or other liabilities incurred whilst under trying circumstances.

The poor (*fuqarā'*) are those who possess something, but it is little. The needy (*masākīn*) on the other hand, are those whose condition is similar to the poor but they are not recognised by society as being impoverished. In this regard it might be that others may give them something in charity, and they will not beg from people.<sup>687</sup>

It should be remembered that apart from a priority given to the above mentioned group in receiving *zakāt*, Islam hates to see any individual Muslims live in idleness and depend on others' compassion. Rather, Islam encourages them to work in order to get what they need as long as they are capable of doing this. Otherwise, it becomes the state's responsibility to protect the weak and to care for and defend their interests. At this stage, Quṭb maintained that *zakāt* plays its role as a social duty whenever the State which is entrusted to observe the institution, makes it as an obligatory claim on the property of the wealthy in favour of the poor. Quṭb states:

Islam establish the life of its members on the basis that everyone is given opportunity to work and earn money, and distributing the public wealth among them rightly and justly between the work and reward...but there are certain circumstances where *sadaqa* has to play its role in order to solve the class difference among the individual members of the community (*umma*)<sup>688</sup>

Quṭb also has a view that the function of *zakāt* as a social duty is not only limited to giving the poor a share to the property of the wealthy<sup>689</sup>, but in a wider sense, it aims at implanting the sense of responsibility among the latter to take care of the welfare of other fellow Muslims who live around him.

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<sup>687</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 3:1669.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid., 3:1668.

<sup>689</sup> The wealthy here refers specifically to those whose property remain in their possession for a year and its values reaches a certain limit called *niṣāb*.



On the whole, the institution of *zakāt* was regarded by Quṭb as the most important aspect of the Islamic social and economic system. The State that implemented the *sharīʿa* law would have to play its role in seeing that it was implemented properly. In this regard, Quṭb maintained that implanting a sense of responsibility in the individuals' conscience was vital in helping fellow Muslims. In the light of these two means, Quṭb believed that a sound and just society could be established.

#### 5.4.5 Usury (*ribā*) and its prohibition

As mentioned earlier, Islam places much concern on wealth and its social equity. Wealth should not be misused by being circulated only amongst a small group of people whilst the welfare of the whole community, in particular the poor and the needy, is ignored. Since wealth is “the bounty of God (*fadl Allah*)” and “good (*khayr*),” its expenditure must be in such a way that it brings peace and prosperity to the owner and the whole community at large.<sup>690</sup> For this reason, any kind of expenditure or investment that grows several-fold exclusively in the hands of a particular group whilst the rest have nothing, is prohibited by Islam.

In the Qur'ān, there are many verses condemning such activities. It is suggested that only the expenditures which seek the pleasure of God, and “establish credit with God, so that God may repay you manifold,” are those which are rightful and will profit you and the people living around you.<sup>691</sup> Our previous discussion on wealth and its spending has suggested this and suggested how successful such individuals are in the sight of God.

It becomes the objective of the teachings of Islam to ensure justice and eliminate exploitation in transactions pertaining to wealth and expenditure. With regard to individual business transactions, for instance, there is a clear statement

<sup>690</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), 39.

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.



from the Qur'ān concluding that all sources of unjustified enrichment (*akl al-amwāl bi'l-bāṭil*) are prohibited. Verse 188 of *Sūra 2 (al-Baqāra)* states: “And eat up not one another’s property unjustly, nor give bribery to the rulers that you may knowingly eat up a part of the property of others sinfully.” At another place the Qur'ān says:

O you who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves unjustly except if it be a trade amongst you, by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another). Surely, Allah is Most Merciful to you.<sup>692</sup>

From the above verses one can clearly see how the Qur'ān has laid down principles whereby Muslims, individually or collectively know, or can at least deduce what constitutes a wrongful or rightful way of earning or gaining property from others. According to Quṭb, the words “*akl al-amwāl bi'l-bāṭil*” are applicable to all wrongful sources of earning or acquiring wealth: bribery, gambling and all fraudulent businesses and monetary practices. All of these are prohibited by Islam. In this regard *ribā* represents, in the Islamic value system, a prominent source of unjustified advantage.<sup>693</sup> Moreover, its practice opposes the Islamic principle on wealth acquisition highlighted earlier.

The question of *ribā* and its prohibition constitutes one of the most important issues raised by Quṭb in *Ẓilāl*. In his detailed account on usurious transaction, we found that he referred to al-Mawdūdī’s ideas on the Islamic economic system (the nature of usurious transaction in particular). This can be seen from Quṭb’s statements in which, several times over, he recommended his readers to read al-Mawdūdī’s *Economic principles Between Islam and Other Contemporary Systems* and *al-Ribā*. His intention was for his readers to gain a deeper understanding of the principles of

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<sup>692</sup> Qur'ān 4: 29.

<sup>693</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:639.

the Islamic economic system, as well as an understanding of the implications drawn from God's prohibition of *ribā*.<sup>694</sup>

With regard to the issue of usurious transaction, Quṭb took a cautious stance where he considered any human transaction and expenditure of wealth that deviates from the religious rules to be of no benefit to the proprietor. Rather, it may lead him to become engulfed in immoral transactions, particularly usurious practices.

Quṭb's interpretation of verse 39 of *Sūra* 30 (*al-Rūm*) contained some important points for consideration. For example, one can see how Quṭb stood with regard to usury when he asked Muslims to keep themselves away from anything related to usury. The Qur'ān states:

And that which you give in gift (to others), in order that it may increase (your wealth by expecting to get a better one in return) from other people's property, has no increase with Allah; but that which you give in *zakāt* seeking Allah's Countenance, then those they shall have manifold increase.

Generally, most of the exegetes, including al-Ṭabarī<sup>695</sup> and Ibn Kathīr<sup>696</sup> took the view that the verse was revealed about one form of usury and explained how it deprived wealth from getting God's blessings. Furthermore, indulging in this form of usury would be of no benefit to the proprietor himself. This usury however was permissible since it did not involve an exploitation of other people's rights and so on. According to Quṭb, though the verse did not prohibit this form of usury like that associated with the modern ages, such a means of increasing money was not a good way of seeking God's Countenance (*wajh Allah*) and should be avoided. The type of expenditure that will raise one's wealth manifold is *zakāt*, where the contributor expects nothing, but is seeking God's Countenance.<sup>697</sup>

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<sup>694</sup> Quṭb, *Ṣilāl*, 1:321–332.

<sup>695</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 10:187–189.

<sup>696</sup> 'Imād al-Dīn Abū'l-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn Kathīr al-Qurshī al-Dimashqī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm* (Beirut: Mu'assasa al-Rayyān, 1996), 3:571.

<sup>697</sup> Quṭb, *Ṣilāl*, 5:2772.

Quṭb's approach to usury and its practices hence took the form of total avoidance. He believed that usury not only destroyed man's honour, but the whole community at large. This is clear from his statement, "usurious transactions (*ʿamaliyyat al-ribā*) expose forms of ugliness and unsightliness, dullness within the heart, deterioration in society and corruption of the earth and [lastly] the destruction of the whole of mankind."<sup>698</sup>

#### 5.4.5.1 Islamic injunction

Before considering what the Qur'ān lays down with regard to this issue, it is important to look into the modern economic systems that control the world, we may then understand the wisdom behind the prohibition of usury in Islam. In this regard, Quṭb referred to the capitalist and communist systems which, in his view, were influential in the running of world economic affairs.<sup>699</sup>

According to Quṭb, the capitalist system is founded on the basis that man is the owner of what he earns. Therefore, man has full rights in spending and developing his property or capital as he pleases without limitations or conditions. In the end, however, this creates an economic imbalance, which divides society into a class system with one group living a luxurious lifestyle while the others live in poverty.<sup>700</sup> The imbalance worsens when the capital owners start to set up financial and banking institutions in order to gain more and more money through channels such as the lending of money with interest and so on. This phenomenon, according to Quṭb, is the starting point of their exploitation of wealth and their profiting at the cost of others. This happens in today's economic transactions. Quṭb saw a clear example of this in the transaction between the capital owner and those working in commerce and industry: the first always makes profit from usurious interest imposed upon the

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<sup>698</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:318.

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:320.

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:319–320. See also 2:639.

latter's incomes. In this regard, as a creditor, the capital owner strives to get the highest interest he can, even though this will cause the overall decline of industrial and economic production, production which is in the communities interest (*li ṣāliḥ al-jamāhīr*).<sup>701</sup>

In order to retain their control over the public interest, they also exploit the media; newspapers become tools in spreading the capitalist ideology. As a result, people start to believe that the capitalist system is the only system capable of bringing development and progress to mankind.<sup>702</sup>

Communism, on the other hand, arose as a reaction to the capitalist system. Its economic structure, although seeming to be backing the welfare of the public interest in order to establish distributive justice, completely denies the spiritual aspects essential in human life. In his book *Naḥw Mujtamaʿ Islāmī*, Quṭb severely condemned communism stating that such an ideology, though possibly solving economic disparity, denied religious belief and will lead people in the wrong direction.<sup>703</sup> Quṭb wrote:

in view of the fact that man, after being able to satisfy 'starvation of the body (*jasad*)', will find himself in need of a goal which is greater than these enjoyments, and in need of a connection with the universe that comprise of environment, and in need of *ʿaqīda* in strength that is greater than (the strength) of human being.<sup>704</sup>

In addition to its denial of religious beliefs, there is another aspect that demonstrates the faults in the system. While Islam permits private ownership with certain conditions and limitations, communism claims that all sources of production of wealth are the common property of society and individuals have no right to

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<sup>701</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 2:639.

<sup>702</sup> Ibid., 1:320. See also for detail, Quṭb's work, *Maʿrakat al-Islām wa'l-Ra'smāliyya*.

<sup>703</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Naḥw Mujtamaʿ Islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993), 25.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid., 29.



possession of property or its control. This is, in fact, at odds with human nature. Man is created to love wealth and to utilize its prosperity.<sup>705</sup>

These are phenomenon of the modern age based on materialistic thinking. According to Quṭb, aside from those who believe in development and progress, there are people who contemplate gaining profit at the expense of others without consideration for or sensitivity towards their rights. The usurious practices in the capitalist system are an example of this.<sup>706</sup> This exploitation is one of the major phenomena which opposes the Islamic economic principle. This principle maintains that nobody has the right to profit at the cost of others. Verses 29 and 30 of *Sūra* 4 (*al-Nisā'*) state:

O you who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves unjustly except it be a trade amongst you, by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another). Surely, Allah is Most Merciful to you; and whoever commits that through aggression and injustice, We shall cast him into the Fire, and that is easy for Allah.

At this point it is possible to consider Quṭb's rejection of both the capitalist and communist systems based on his conviction that both systems are unable to solve the existing economic disparities facing society. This is due to the fact that they are both materialistic in nature and lack spiritual and ethical values in their agendas.

Islam, on the other hand, bases its economic structure on the belief that God is the Creator and the Owner of everything.<sup>707</sup> In addition to faith, ethical values such as solidarity, cooperation and kindness between members of society are emphasized. This means that there is no exploitation and monopoly over others' rights to wealth. The obligation of *zakāt* as a social duty and the encouragement of *ṣadaqa* as described earlier are means of establishing such goodwill.

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<sup>705</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:319.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid., 1:320–321.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid., 1:318.

According to Quṭb, it is upon the foundations of faith in God, co-operation and solidarity among members of society, that Islam stresses the individual's conscience in order that he does not lose his direction in dealing with his fellow men with regard to wealth and its development. Those who break this principle are considered as cruel (*ẓālim*) to themselves and the community as a whole.<sup>708</sup>

Quṭb took the view that *ribā* (usury) is the major cause of exploitation and oppression in human society. It is also a basis for social destruction, since it destroys the individual's character, his religious belief and his economic foundation.<sup>709</sup> Its prohibition is thus inevitable in a just society as has been exemplified by the early Muslim generations. More importantly, the negative aspects of *riba* are clearly contradictory to the Islamic principle described above.

#### 5.4.5.2 Prohibition of Usury (*Ribā*)

Quṭb maintained that the prohibition of *ribā* has a strong relationship with the nature of its practice and its impact upon society and the individual. This implies that the prohibition of *ribā* is due to the negative consequences for society that arise from its practice.

The economic system of Islam is based on a clear foundation and doctrinal conception (*al-taṣawwur al-ʿiṭiqādī*). Man, who is God's vicegerent in this world, is responsible in upholding God's command in accordance with His *sharīʿa*. Man's recognition of the *ulūhiyya* and *ḥākimiyya* of God, as already discussed in the preceding chapter, requires him to follow the *sharīʿa* of God in governing his affairs and economic activities. For this reason, there is no room or reason for man to choose other systems to govern his life, since everything has been perfectly and completely prescribed for him. Quṭb maintained that laws and systems other than God's law, which some people insist on following, will not be recognised by Islam.

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<sup>708</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:319.

<sup>709</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:318.

In this regard, usurious practice is unexceptional since it is derived from the doctrine that completely denies the Islamic principles on wealth and its expenditure mentioned earlier.<sup>710</sup>

In the Qur'ān, the prohibition of *ribā* is clearly affiliated with *ṣadaqa* (almsgiving), where *ṣadaqa* is the giving away of wealth without expecting a return. *Ribā*, however, destroys all sympathetic affection and the spirit of co-operation and harmony.<sup>711</sup> Moreover, the way the money is earned is unlawful and involves the exploitation of others: the owner of capital gaining profit without work and without risk.<sup>712</sup>

Besides the exploitation and oppression resulting from such a transaction, Quṭb maintained that *ribā* also causes great problems to the individual's personal expenses. There is no benediction from God upon money earned through *ribā*. Rather, God denounces the usurers and their expenditures.<sup>713</sup> How, therefore, can a Muslim who declares his total obedience to God and follows His commands, utilise such forbidden money when supporting himself and his family? In this regard, Quṭb wrote that "there is no obedience (*ṭāʿa*) to Allah and to His Prophet in a society that bases its system on the usurious system (*al-niẓām al-ribawī*), and there is no obedience to Allah and to His Prophet in the heart of those eating *ribā*..."<sup>714</sup>

At this point the Islamic attitude to *ribā* is clear and unambiguous. The relevant Qur'anic verses on *ribā* prohibition leave us in no doubt whatsoever. There is, however, the example of the individual Muslim who, instead of obeying a clear command from God, has lost his hold on Islamic principles and their economic implications. Quṭb stated that, despite the economic problems of the world, faith

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<sup>710</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:318–319.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid., 1:318.

<sup>712</sup> Ibid., 1:320.

<sup>713</sup> Ibid., 1:318.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid., 1:474.

(*īmān*) is the most important factor in influencing the individual's actions. In this context, it is impossible to consider those involved in *ribā* transaction as true believers since the measurement of faith is not merely by that which is said but is also by actions confirming that which is said. There would be no such *ribā* eating (*akl al-ribā*), therefore, amongst those who are afraid of God and His punishment in the hereafter.<sup>715</sup>

The Qur'anic injunctions about *ribā* are found in the following verses when God said:

Those who devour *Ribā* (usury) will not stand except like the standing of a person beaten by Satan leading him to insanity. That is because they say: 'Trading is only like *Ribā* (usury),' whereas Allah has permitted trading and forbidden *Ribā* (usury). So whosoever receives an admonition from his Lord and stops eating *Ribā* (usury) shall not be punished for the past; his case is for Allah (to judge); but whoever returns [to *Ribā* (usury)], such are the dwellers of the Fire-they will abide therein.<sup>716</sup>

Again, in the same *Sūra* God reminds Muslims about *ribā*: "Allah will destroy *Ribā* (usury) and will give increase for *ṣadaqāt* (deeds of charity, alms, etc.) And Allah likes not the disbelievers, sinners."<sup>717</sup>

In interpreting these verses, Quṭb reminds Muslims about the negative consequences derived from *ribā* transactions and the severe punishment from God in the hereafter for those taking *ribā* as a means of increasing their wealth. According to him, the way the Qur'ān describes the condition of people taking *ribā* should make sense to those concerned and have a great impact upon them because, in reality (*haqīqa wāqī'a*), they are not as happy as one might assume.<sup>718</sup> Quṭb wonders how these people can live peacefully and happily if the way in which they live is not

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<sup>715</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:474.

<sup>716</sup> Qur'ān, 2: 275.

<sup>717</sup> Ibid., 2: 276.

<sup>718</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:326.



recognized as lawful by God and His Prophet?<sup>719</sup> It is clear that they are cursed by God and His Prophet as Jabir<sup>720</sup> reports that, “The Prophet of God (pbuh) cursed the one who consumes *ribā* (usury), his deputy, the scribe and the witness, and said: They are equal.”<sup>721</sup>

It is interesting how Quṭb related the above verses with the contemporary human life. In interpreting the word standing (*qiyām*), for instance, he attached a relationship with the existing situation to it by referring to those who practiced usurious transactions. He believed that their condition is likely to be the same as that described in the verse. He goes further in maintaining that their situation is confirmed in the subsequent verses in which God declare war upon them.<sup>722</sup>

In describing the range of connotations of *ribā*, Quṭb wrote that the term itself encompasses all types of interest, large or small percentages, resulting from late payment (*ribā al-nasī’a*) or due to unequal exchange of the same commodity (*ribā al-faḍl*). It also includes every loan carrying benefit etc.; the text includes all these kinds.<sup>723</sup> At this point, it can be said that the term “*al-ribā*”, as expressed in the Qur’ān, covers usury as well as the interest associated with modern economics. It also covers some cases of barter which involve unequal exchange in terms of quantity or time of delivery. Quṭb cited one of the Prophet’s *ahādīth* which states:

gold for gold, silver for silver, wheat for wheat, barley for barley, date for date and salt for salt be exchanged, the same thing for the same thing, in equal quantity and hand to hand; one who has demanded extra or paid extra, he has indulged in *riba*.<sup>724</sup>

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<sup>719</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:324.

<sup>720</sup> He was one of the Prophet’s (pbuh) companions.

<sup>721</sup> Narrated by Muslim, Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and Turmizi. See Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:326.

<sup>722</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:324.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid., 1:325.

<sup>724</sup> Ibid.

There is no doubt, therefore, about the prohibition of *ribā al-nasī'a* because of the 'increase' associated with it resulting from late payment. Moreover, the interest itself is agreed upon so as to guarantee the lender extra return in case of the late payment of the loan or debt. With regard to *ribā al-faḍl*, Quṭb maintained that its prohibition is due to the way it works which is similar to *ribā al-nasī'a*: in *ribā al-faḍl*, in the exchange of similar items, one party demands more of one commodity in exchange for the other (for example one party demanding two poor quality apples in exchange for one better quality apple). In order to avoid this, the Prophet (pbuh) asked those involved in such a transaction to firstly sell their commodity for money and then buy the other commodity with that money. Provided that such a transaction takes place at once in the tradition of the Prophet: hand by hand (*yadan bi yadin*).<sup>725</sup>

It would seem, from Quṭb's description of *ribā al-nasī'a* and *ribā al-faḍl*, that he followed al-Mawdūdī's view on the subject. In explaining the nature of *ribā*, al-Mawdūdī believed that the term *ribā* refers to any kind of loan (money, food or anything else) that may earn interest. He has therefore divided *ribā* into two categories: *ribā al-nasī'a* and *ribā al-faḍl*. *Ribā al-nasī'a*, according to al-Mawdūdī, is a specified increase in return for postponement of, or waiting for, payment of a debt. *Ribā al-faḍl*, on the other hand, is something extra benefitting one of the parties involved in the exchange of the same commodity.<sup>726</sup>

Turning to the implications of usurious practice in the socio-economic affairs of society, Quṭb believed that such a practice will, without doubt, cause estrangement between members of society, in particular the lender and the borrower.<sup>727</sup> How can a good relationship be maintained between two parties if one side always seeks to profit from the money lent to the other, the latter always being burdened with high interest? This phenomenon will remain unresolved if the lender or the owner of the

<sup>725</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:325.

<sup>726</sup> Abū'l-A'la al-Mawdūdī, *al-Ribā* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 90–91.

<sup>727</sup> Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, 1:321.

capital believes that he is unaccountable to God for his methods of gaining and increasing his wealth.<sup>728</sup> And there is no law (*tashrīʿ*) that controls the whole economic structure and phenomena such as exploitation and monopoly over the needy. Quṭb wrote that: “The *imām* is responsible, – once the Islamic society is established – to fight against those who are persistent (in their practice) in the usurious system, and violate God’s command even though they claim themselves Muslims.”<sup>729</sup>

This is one aspect of the implications arising as a result of usurious practice. What would happen to a society where the usurious system (*al-nizām al-ribawī*) has become the basis of economic transaction? Quṭb recognized that the Prophet’s tradition, mentioned earlier, has aspects whereby condemnation is not just limited to lender and borrower but to all members of society. Moreover, they all deserve God’s condemnation and being denied His mercy due to their being involved in such activities by passively allowing such behaviour.<sup>730</sup>

At this point, it is found that Quṭb’s stance on usury and its prohibition was clearly outlined and in line with Islamic economic principle. Moreover, he believed that the reasons behind such a practice being prohibited were not only on account of *ribā* bringing chaos to society, but more importantly because the system itself was in contradiction to the *manhaj* of God: the system guaranteeing human well-being in this world and in the hereafter.

Furthermore, he contended that there were Western scholars who realized the negative elements of usury and recognised their destructive potential. Among those scholars were Dr. Schacht, former director of the German Reichsbank who stated that:

In a theoretical mathematical exercise it became clear that all the wealth in the world was in the process of going to a very small number of the usurers.

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<sup>728</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:319.

<sup>729</sup> Ibid., 1:331.

<sup>730</sup> Ibid.

This is because the usurious creditors always profit from every operation, while the debtors are exposed to profit and loss. It follows from this that all the wealth must finally – on a mathematical calculation – find its way to the one who always profits. And this theory is on its way to being demonstrated completely, since most of the wealth in the world now is owned-really-by a few thousand people. As for all property owners, including factory owners, who borrow from banks and the workers and others, they are but hirelings who work for the owners of wealth, and the fruits of their toil are reaped by those few thousand.<sup>731</sup>

Realising this, Quṭb concluded that any kind of transaction that has usurious aspects, small or large, is prohibited. Indeed, the usurers deserve God's condemnation. Moreover, this prohibition is not only limited to the type of *ribā* practiced in the *jāhiliyya* period, as manifested in both *ribā nasī'a* and *ribā faḍl*, but encompasses all fraudulent devices that did not come directly under the definition of *ribā*. It also encompasses all those owners of wealth who intend to profit from their wealth by exploiting others.<sup>732</sup>

Despite the Qur'ānic order on the prohibition of *ribā*, Quṭb maintained that the door is always open for individuals to repent and return back to the right path. However, those who continue, in spite of the warning (of its destructive potential) from the Qur'ān, are the dwellers of the Fire in the hereafter.<sup>733</sup> That is why, in another verse, these people are considered enemies of God and His messenger. The Qur'ān states:

O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and give up What remains of your demand from *ribā* if ye are indeed believers. But if you do it not, then take notice of war from Allah and His Messenger; and if you repent, then you shall have your capital; neither shall you make the debtor suffer loss nor shall be made to suffer loss.<sup>734</sup>

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<sup>731</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:321.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid., 1:325.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid., 1:327. See also Qur'ān, 2:275.

<sup>734</sup> Qur'ān, 2:278–279.



Quṭb saw how relevant this verse was to the existing situation facing society as a result of usurious practice. In his view, the declaration of war against the usurers is appropriate since, in reality, those usurers are the instigators of war, exploiting wealth and gaining profits on the backs of others.<sup>735</sup> Their practices not only damage the harmonious environment and human solidarity which Islam has established through its social and economic principles (*zakāt*, *ṣadaqa*, etc.), but they circulate their wealth amongst themselves in such a way that the other members of society only have access to it with a high interest burden imposed on them.<sup>736</sup>

Since feelings of covetousness, greediness and stinginess are those which lead individuals to usurious practice, Quṭb held the opinion that fear of God (*taqwā*) becomes a strong weapon within the soul against usury. If such an internal weapon is not established, the enforcement of law is inevitable in driving those lenders and borrowers back to the right path as exemplified by the Prophet and his companions in administering their government.<sup>737</sup>

In order to achieve *taqwā*, one needs to repent of his sins and ask God's forgiveness. This repentance includes an internal struggle within the soul against lust for money, greediness and selfishness since all these attitudes contribute in leading one to usurious involvement.<sup>738</sup>

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<sup>735</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 1:331.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid., 1:329–331.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid., 1:330–331.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid., 1:477.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Sayyid Quṭb was one of the most important Muslim figures of the twentieth century. His fame stems from the fact that his writings have influenced modern Muslim generations and have inspired numerous revivalist movements throughout the Muslim world in their struggles to reform Muslim life in accordance with Qur'anic teachings.

Quṭb came from a religious family background. His exposure to political struggle can be traced to childhood experience whereby his house became a meeting place for the Nationalist movement that struggled for Egyptian independence from British rule. Quṭb's interest in this political struggle and his concern for the pressing social, economic and political problems facing his country intensified during his stay in Cairo. His years in Cairo witnessed him coming under the influence of al-°Aqqād, a journalist, literary critic and Wafd party member. Under al-°Aqqād's influence, Quṭb devoted almost twenty-five years to being a literary critic and proponent of the Western democratic ideology and literature.

Quṭb's interest in Islam and his emergence as an Islamic writer began in the middle of the 1940s. Among the main reasons behind Quṭb's change from poet, educator and literary critic to committed Muslim were the following:

1. The continuing social, economic and political problems facing Egyptian society at that time. These problems worsened after World War II, resulting in the country entering a period of increased violence and chaos, the gap between the rich and the poor, already substantial, being further enlarged. This phenomenon brought Quṭb to Islam in order to find a solution for existing problems
2. The Qur'ān's influence on Quṭb, having devoted almost eight years to the study of its literature and imagery. These studies convinced him that the Qur'ān and its messages were relevant to the Muslims' current situation and contained the solution, therefore, to the existing social problems.

3. Quṭb's disenchantment with the West, after witnessing their continuing interference in the political and economic affairs of Egypt. His rejection of the West became more prominent during his stay in America. This time abroad enabled him to see the materialistic thinking of Western people and their life-style for what it was. It led him to the complete conviction that only the Islamic way of life was viable in this century. Both the outburst of joy from the Americans at al-Bannā's assassination and the West's continuing support of oppression implemented by the Egyptian authorities to undermine Islamic groups such as the Ikhwān accelerated Quṭb's interest in the struggle for the Islamic cause.

The years between 1948 and 1952 witnessed the appearance of Quṭb's Islamic works including *al-ʿAdāla al-Ijtimāʿiyya* (1949), *Maʿrakat al-Islām wa'l-Raʾsmāliyya and al-Salām al-ʿAlamī wa'l-Islām* (1951), and *Fī Zilāl al-Qurʾān* (1952), all of which signified his Islamic orientation. Out of all of these works, *Zilāl* was the most comprehensive: it tackled all the issues in more detail, approaching topics such as society, politics and economy on the basis of the Qurʾān. Moreover, the year *Zilāl* was written, there were new developments in Quṭb's thought after his joining the Ikhwān and his exposure to such influences as al-Bannā and al-Mawdūdī. That was why, in his treatment of social and political questions in *Zilāl*, terms like *jāhiliyya*, *hākimiyya*, and *manhaj* appear widely. These terms were a reflection of Quṭb's new development resulting from the above influences and his prison experience.

Quṭb's joining the Ikhwān in late 1951 and his struggle alongside the Ikhwān members belied his position as merely a social thinker and writer whose concerns lay only with dissecting theoretical ideas. Instead, his activities with the Ikhwān and his struggle to establish Islamic social justice in Egyptian society clearly showed that he was a sincere thinker who saw that something must be done to solve existing

problems. He believed that the application of Qur'anic messages in human life was necessary, since this signified one's faith (*īmān*) in God and one's obedience (Islam) to His command. Therefore, such involvement in the Ikhwān's activities, including its struggle against the unjust establishment ending up with his imprisonment and execution in 1966, clearly signified sincerity in his belief that Islam should govern Muslim affairs instead of man-made ideologies.

The emergence of the "social justice" theme in Quṭb's thought can only be understood within the context of the prevailing conditions in Egypt. In this regard, Quṭb, like the fellow scholars of his time, saw that "something must be done" to solve prevailing problems. Social justice derived from the Qur'anic teaching must, therefore, be established in society. He tried to justify this notion of social justice in Islamic terms using Qur'anic verses as sources of reference, instead of adhering to human ideologies such as socialism and communism. Quṭb explained that social justice is all embracing in the sense that it includes justice in all aspects of human life, spiritual and material, and is not merely limited to economic justice. Human beings have to be just towards themselves, their families and their communities. This must begin with the purification of human hearts from the worship of anything but God alone. Only from such a group of people, whose beliefs are completely free of servitude to anyone but God, can a new community whose social, political and economic affairs based on the *sharīʿa* of God be established. For justice, co-operation and integration between human beings constitute part of the existing justice and unity in the rest of God's creations in this universe.

Social justice in Islam is, therefore, derived from the absolute justice of Islam, and is applicable to all aspects of human affairs, political systems, social relations, and economic foundations. It has no reference to foreign ideologies that do not underpin their principles with Divine law. The way Quṭb understood the Qur'ān and the approaches he employed in studying its messages along with the experience



of living in the “*jāhiliyya* society” surrounding him, made his treatment of social problems in his society vary from some of his contemporaries. This could be seen for example, from his commentary on certain verses of the Qur’ān with regard to social and political issues. Quṭb maintained that justice in human social affairs is for all people irrespective of religious belief, race and nationality. It is God’s direct command and is not influenced by human desire or group interests. The need to establish justice, therefore, becomes a religious duty upon every individual Muslim because the implementation of justice itself indicates one’s faith in God and in His attributes: *ulūhiyya*, *rubūbiyya* and *ḥākimiyya*.

Since Islam is a comprehensive system dealing with all aspects of life, Quṭb, therefore, believed that Islamic social justice must also take into account all human affairs from the individual’s moral character and his ability for compassion to questions relating to the Islamic political system and the management of the economy, including wealth and ways of spending it. Omitting any aspect relating to human affairs would mean a defect in the means of establishing social justice.

The significance of an Islamic political system, including its governmental principles, stems from the fact that its establishment become a religious duty, and one of the means of observing God’s *sharīʿa*. This means that the realization of Islamic justice in society not only depends on the individual’s conscience but also requires the enforcement of the *sharīʿa* law executed exclusively by the *imām* of the state. In addition, Quṭb believed, the application of the *sharīʿa* law indicates people’s recognition of God’s sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*) in that God is the Law-Giver and Legislator.

Throughout his justification of how Muslims should conduct their government and life, Quṭb extensively used the Qur’ān. He tried to interpret and relate its verses to principles of a governmental system, this, he believed, could bring justice in the governmental administration, a justice founded on recognition of the

*tawḥīd* of God. Quṭb outlined six main characteristics of an Islamic political systems: God's sovereignty (*hākimiyyat Allah*), Caliphate (*Khilāfa*) or Imamate (*Imāma*) government, Consultative (*Shūrā*) government, Justice and Equality (*al-ʿAdl wa'l-Musāwa*), Pledge (*Bayʿa*) and Obedience (*Tāʿa*).

Besides its foundation on the *tawḥīd* of God, the governmental system of Islam or the state is co-operative in the sense that both the *imām* and the governed people consult one another, seeking God's pleasure. Since the Qur'ān does not specify a particular method of *shūrā*, Quṭb left the method of arriving at such a consensus to be determined by the needs of the age. The *imām*'s position is conditional to his administering the state justly and executing the *sharīʿa* law. The governed people have to obey the *imām* so long as he observes *sharīʿa* in his administration. If the *imām* deviates, the governed people's duty of obedience ceases. This consultative government aims at ensuring justice and eliminating the abuse of political power on the part of the *imām* or ruler.

In his treatment of wealth and social equity, Quṭb took the view that economic justice would only exist when individuals believed that wealth belongs to God and their ownership of wealth is merely trusteeship. By understanding this position, the individual will take on the responsibility of spending his wealth in the right way and will be ready to share it with others who also have a right to God's wealth. Quṭb affirmed that Islam recognises private ownership in the sense that whatever the individual makes or earns through lawful means is regarded as his own possession. This private ownership is however, bound by certain limitations, for example, the individual must not be involved in wasteful spending.

According to Quṭb there are two means of accruing wealth; 1) any type of work which is not contradictory to principles laid down by the *sharīʿa* and 2) inheritance. Thus, robbing, gambling, usury, deceit, hoarding and monopolising of

resources are prohibited and any individuals indulging in such activities deserve punishment.

In regard to the payment of *zakāt* as a social and religious duty upon individual Muslims, Quṭb's treatment of the subject took an explanatory form. He believed that educating people about *zakāt* and the reason for its obligation and the reward one would get from God would result in firmer intentions among people to pay *zakāt* and perform this religious duty. It is on this point that Quṭb's interpretation of some verses on *zakāt* differed from other scholars like Tabarī and Rashīd Ridā for instance. The point of divergence between Quṭb and those two scholars was mainly on the subject of the current Muslim generation. Quṭb maintained that the current phenomenon of Muslims' and their indulgence in an un-Islamic way of life was the main reason why a new approach must be employed, one that would bring them back to God's *manhaj*: the payment of *zakāt* and observance of His other commands.

Our analysis of Quṭb's treatment of social and political issues and his effort to call Muslims back to the *manhaj* of God revealed that he was of the conviction that an Islamic community could be established again if people would fulfil exactly the demands of the Qur'ān. The only thing to do was to call people to refresh their mind and to live their lives in accordance with the Qur'anic teachings. A dynamic *fiqh* (*al-fiqh al-ḥarakī*), therefore, became Quṭb's priority, rather than *fiqh* of papers (*fiqh al-awrāq*) in his calling for observance of the *sharīʿa* of God. In the context of the current situation, Quṭb saw that *fiqh* of paper, one that is full of juristic arguments, would have little impact in bringing people to the *manhaj* of God. He believed that it would indulge the individuals in juristic arguments instead of impelling their hearts to follow God's command. Since the modern society in which Muslims were living was no longer Islamic, a new approach that concentrated on how to understand the Qur'anic messages and made them relevant to modern society was vital. It is therefore *fiqh ḥarakī* that would enable Muslims to run their lives in line with the



teachings of the Qur'ān, whose messages are applicable and suitable for all times and all places. This was the main reason behind Quṭb's devoting little discussion to juristic questions as is particularly apparent in his treatment of *zakāt*, *shūrā* and so on. The following statement from Quṭb would clarify his stance with regard to *fiqh* themes:

These three verses (Qur'ān 4: 7,8 and 176) contain the principles of the science of inheritance. But as for details the *Sunna* has taken care and the jurists (*fuqahā'*) have also explained application of these principles. It is not for us to dwell on detail and application; the place for that is the books of *fiqh*. We shall be contented, in *Zilāl*, with the explanation of these verses and comment on the basis of the Islamic system contained therein. Details should be obtained from *Fiqh* Book.<sup>739</sup>

One has to note that Quṭb's avoidance of *fiqh* themes and its juristic arguments in much of his discussions does not imply his total rejection of *fiqh*, which is basic to any meaningful and acceptable acts of *'ibāda* that a Muslim may embark on. Rather, he took the view that once an Islamic community and state were established, and once people knew exactly what their faith demanded of them, a need to delve into *fiqh* questions would arise in order to provide for the needs of the emerging Muslim community.

Looking to the overall discussion of *Zilāl* and Quṭb's effort in describing the foundations that Muslims have to follow in realizing social justice, we find that Quṭb did not perceive militancy as the only means of achieving his ideas, the opposite being claimed by Sivan.<sup>740</sup> Rather, Quṭb preferred to employ an educational approach to human conscience believing that to be the best way of bringing people back to the *manhaj* of God. This is because with the fear of God in their hearts, individuals will not only refrain from committing wrongs in public, but will also behave appropriately in

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<sup>739</sup> Quṭb, *Zilāl*, 2:590.

<sup>740</sup> Sivan, *Radical Islam*, 87–95.



private since they know that God sees all His servant's deeds and actions wherever they are. To Qutb, the observance of the *sharī'a* law with its full use of force is the final solution, if that is the only means left in bringing people to right path. In this regard, it was the state's responsibility to enforce the *sharī'a* law to its people.

Describing Qutb's approach in inviting fellow Muslims to follow God's command through his writings Muhammad Qutb explained that Qutb had not intended to promote physical violence in his calls for action, but rather had intended to exhort Muslims to make a conscious effort to defend and promote their faith.<sup>741</sup>

Qutb's call for social justice as found in *Ẓilāl*, was, in reality, his call to Islam as a dynamic practice in all aspects of Muslim life. This was in line with the first coming of Islam: the abolishment of slavery of man by man and the turning of people to one God whose justice is for all of His creation without bias to human desire or any particular group interests. Qutb's sincerity and his commitment to see God's justice established through His *sharī'a* had been exemplified by his continuous writing, and his call to people to follow the *manhaj* of God. This was the struggle that finally came to an end with his execution. Describing Qutb's sincerity, Mousalli writes that his (Qutb's) execution demonstrated the level of sacrifice and sincerity of one who dies for a cause:

Their belief cannot be questioned, supposedly. And being a martyr in Islam is one of the highest ranks of belief and worship, and Qutb, in the eyes of fundamentalists and others, paid the price for his belief.<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>741</sup> Tripp, "Sayyid Qutb: The Political Vision," 177.

<sup>742</sup> Mousalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*, 244.

By looking into Quṭb's socio-political discussions in *Ẓilāl*, it can be said with certainty that he was a genuine Muslim reformer. His solutions for the social, political and economic inequalities between Muslims and his suggestions regarding the necessity of establishing Islamic social justice were clearly successful. This can be seen for example, from the increase in numbers of Muslims from various intellectual backgrounds in Egypt who were interested in reading the *Ẓilāl* and were greatly influenced by its author. This was among the main reasons behind the government of Egypt curbing Quṭb's influence by executing him in 1966.

Quṭb's response to the socio-political problems of his time began with his investigation into the roots of the problems. He tried to find solutions by considering whatever means available to him. This included his looking into some Western ideologies. His return to Islam, therefore, was not sudden. In fact, his interest in the justice of Islam as a means of solving the current problems developed only after his realisation that the available ideologies, capitalism and communism in particular, could not successfully provide an effective means of establishing social justice in human society. These chronological stages of Quṭb's intellectual development and his continuous efforts in finding solutions to the current problems enabled him to discover "what really needed to be done" to his own society. *Al-ʿAdāla* (1949), *Maʿrakat* (1951) and *al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī* (1951) were among books written by Quṭb in providing some Islamic solutions. Quṭb, however, was still undergoing the process of learning about Islam in greater detail while producing these works. This is why one might find these three books lacking in discussions that relate to the concept of social justice. *Al-ʿAdāla* did provide a general concept of social justice, *Maʿrakat* exposed the real hurdles in attaining justice and *al-Salām al-ʿĀlamī* stressed the significance of *ʿaqīda* as the basis of social justice. There was no single book, however, that discussed all these elements in sufficient detail. That was why these books, in particular, *al-ʿAdāla* received criticism from some modern writers like W

Cantwell Smith and A Mousalli. It was only when *Ẓilāl* was produced that Quṭb discussed the idea of social justice in more detail when the contemporary issues were discussed on the basis of *‘aqīda*. He greatly elaborated on his early ideas and when supporting his argument, he considered the views of scholars like al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Mawdūdī, previously unmentioned in early works.

Therefore, it is from these discussions in *Ẓilāl* that Quṭb’s true personality is revealed. Those who want to study Quṭb’s ideas should look into *Ẓilāl*. It is more relevant than his earlier work as it illustrates the thinking of a more mature Quṭb having experienced the effects of his socio-political environment and his long search for the truth of his religion. In this context, *Ẓilāl* is a necessary reading in understanding Quṭb’s concept of social justice and one should not limit oneself to Quṭb’s earlier works: *al-‘Adāla*, *Mā‘rakat* and *al-Salām al-‘Ālamī*.

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